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## AFTER THREE YEARS.

BY THE

Author of "The Golden Apple," "Aspasia," &c., &c.

### CHAPTER III.

FOUR roads intersected at a little whitewashed building, one end of which was evidently a shop, for at the broad window, sundry cakes, jars of candy, one huge glass, and a covered pot filled with snuff, made eloquent appeal to the passer-by. The scene was not without its picturesque quality, albeit there was something chilly and forlorn in the look of everything. Down to the left, above the stunted growth of the straggling trees, lay, all day, a dismal black cloud, blending with the gray of the sky, and the purple tints of the undulating common, the endless volume of black smoke which poured incessantly from the yawning throats of the great chimneys of Merthyr Tydvil. And to the right stretched off along the sky the group of hills which, like a band of warriors, kept grim guard over Brecknock.

Glamorgan lay to the south, with its great iron-works and its belching chimneys. Northerly were the collieries, and the bleak mountain peaks; the westerly road pursued its uneven way to Caermarthen and Cardigan, and the easterly one held out its grasp upon Monmouth and Hereford.

A few straggling houses, scattered here and there, could be seen from this elevated spot, and one clustering village, nestling in a narrow strip of fertile valley. Cattle and sheep were browsing on every green hillock, and just below the little cake-shop, within hail of a shrill halloo, was a comfortable-looking farmhouse, the house, and out-buildings, and very fences whitewashed to a snowy hue which was very cheerful looking, in contrast with so many dismal tints of bleak moor, and bare mountain, and smoky clouds.

The shop was also a habitation, for there was a little kitchen garden in the rear, from which came, every now and then, an odd noise, between laughter and shouting, which occasionally died into something like

[LUKE MORTON HAS DOUBTS.]

an old woman's crouching to herself, or an infant's cooing.

A woman came to the door and listened, and then called out, sharply:

"Manty, Manty, are you there?"

There came no reply, but the crouching, singing voice below still continued. She gave a heavy sigh, and a troubled look crossed her wrinkled face.

"He is safe at least. I woke up with such a heavy weight on my heart. I made sure something had happened to him. Heaven save us! that dream haunts me. I must find out what it means. It can't be for naught that I went to sleep in my chair and dreamed that dream."

With slow, deliberate steps, she passed down the well-worn path, and made her way into the garden, which was screened by a tall hedge of some thorny shrub, with a narrow passage-way cut through for a gateway.

She paused and looked in, when she reached this place, and a singular expression, blending passionate devotion, and deep commiseration, transformed the hitherto passive face, and gave the plain features intense character.

The picture she saw, surely, had little in it to suggest any painful thoughts to a stranger. On the sloping bank, which made a background for a little, tinkling brooklet, lay, reclining at full length, a youth who scarcely seemed to have reached manhood, so perfect a model of youthful beauty that you would think at once of the old myths of Endymion and Narcissus. The face was fair and smooth, with tints of rose and lily as exquisite as could be found on the most lovely, girlish countenance, the features aristocratic in their contour, and as faultless as a Greek statue. His form was slender, exceedingly graceful in its proportions, and his hands white and delicate as an infant's. They were toying now with a wild rose spray, twisting it round and round, while he continued this monotone, whether of song or talk could hardly be determined.

Sadder and sadder grew the face of the woman as she looked, overspread with a cloud of profound melancholy.

But he, suddenly turning his head to watch a lazily floating butterfly, looked up and saw her.

He sprang up, with a chorus of merry laughter, silver-sweet in tone, but, alas, jangled out of any tune or meaning. He lifted his eyes, those large, violet-blue orbs, so perfect in outward fashioning, but alas, so woefully lacking that which is the eye's soul and glory, the quick, mental consciousness.

"Nannie, Nannie," cried he, and laughed.

She held out her hand, as she would have done for a babe or a kitten, and he bounded forward, seized it, and huddled it up to his breast, with low murmurs, and purrings like a contented animal.

"Nannie is good—good to Manty. She gives him cake and milk. Manty wants cake now."

It was painful, the change this gibbering talk wrought in the perfect face.

"Poor creature!" murmured the woman, "leave you to yourself and you are happy. Why must I disturb your peace? Come, Manty, you shall have your cake."

Her pensive smile woke a gleeful laugh in response.

"Yes, Manty shall have cake," he shouted, and came capering after her, as she led the way into a neat little room, furnished simply, and yet not without its luxuries.

There was a large rocking horse, evidently made to order, because too large for any boy's use, and of the very best materials. A parlour organ on one side, to which he ran, while Dame McNeal was in the pantry, and drew his slender, white fingers over it, and laughed wildly and uproariously at the varying sounds he evoked. Numberless costly automaton playthings, too, were ranged upon a high shelf, out of his reach, and gay-coloured balls of every size and hue were tumbled into a wicker basket under the table.

A bowl of milk, the bowl of the most delicate china, and a plate of cake, with a daintily-fringed napkin were brought to him, and placed upon a little oval table with a protecting ledge, such as we find in a ship's cabin. The spoon was of massive proportions and solid silver, with a crest engraved upon the



handle. Dame McNeal glanced at it gravely, when she put it into the youth's hand, and muttered:

"Aye, it's e'en as near the right as one can come. Alack, alack! our souls are not born of gentle blood it seems, nor mind, only the poor, weak body."

Dame McNeal watched the lad carefully, and when she saw that he had finished she brought a silver mug filled with water, which he accepted greedily. It was evidently the relic of some grand and massive service, and on its solid a coat of arms, like that of the spoon, was exquisitely chased.

Manty put his slender forefinger on the raised figure and traced its outline.

"Pretty, pretty," laughed he. "Nannie thinks it pretty."

"Poor boy! poor innocent!" murmured the woman, wistfully, "it is little enough you know, or care, for the old family pride. Little enough you guess that you have been defrauded in more ways than one. It was your father's cup before you. Well, well—what matter? emptiness and folly, all of it."

Then when the lad had gone out on some childish freak, Dame McNeal sat down heavily in her low rocking-chair, clasping her hands across her knee, and sighing heavily.

"What ails me?" she murmured, presently, "what presses so heavily on my mind? Nothing is changed from what has gone on for twenty years. I have said, a dozen times, every day of every year, that the best thing had been done that could be done. Why do I feel now as if there was a great wrong somewhere? It is none of my planning, anyhow. Heaven save me! I think I am breaking down. Why should I shiver so, thinking that I am left, the only one, the only living and breathing soul, in this great world full, who knows of this thing? But it does send a chill creeping into my very bones, just to look back and remember. She has turned to ashes in her costly coffin, who was once so beautiful, and so proud, and wilful. Imparions as her will was, death was more mighty. And old Morna, the nurse, has been dead this fifteen years, and my lord is gone, too—only Manty, and I left, and he—

who does not dream that there is an old woman out here among the black Welsh hills, whose feeble breath has power to make, or mar, his fortune. I hear wild doings of him. Well, well, well, why do I fret? It does not come of my secrets. I do nothing that keeps silence over other people's—others who are dead and gone—heaven save me—as I may be soon. And then what would become of Manty? That ugly dream haunts me. I seem to see it, as if it were a picture hung up before my eyes. A woman, straight and slender, with such wonderful eyes, wrapped about in a dark brown cloak, with a brown hat and veil, coming up the road—only to think that I can tell just which road!

from Brecon she came, and at the fork of the roads she stopped, and looked around, and put up a white hand to her forehead, as if to help thought, and then she came on, and knocked at my shop door, knocked once, and twice, and the third time she came in, and walked slowly through, into this room, and there she found Manty on the floor asleep, with his cheeks all wet with tears, and beyond, just here, in this chair, in my chair, she found me sitting, bolt upright, but with head fallen low, dead—stone dead. Oh, what a dream! I cannot be rid of it. I never had so clear a dream before. What if it was sent to me for a purpose? If—if—my lord, or my lady, came from that unknown world, and whispered to my sleep, what spirits cannot say to mortal flesh? I have heard of such uncanny things. Ugh! it makes my very bones creep."

She started up, and walked backward and forward, dropping her arms to her side, and swinging them to and fro.

"Woe is me! I am the last, the last to have the care of this unlucky secret. And who knows what chances and changes may come? Alack, alack! if this were only a thing I could talk about, and seek advice upon! But I must do something. The dream has set me thinking, and I will not refuse its warning. I will set me down, and write out what needs proving."

"Heaven be praised that I can write, and make it plain enough for anyone's reading. But this woman, I am sure she was young and fair, and not of common clay—it puzzles me to know what she is to do about it, what part is hers. Heaven will take care of it, I suppose. It is for me to do what I know is my part. I will go this very day to the lawyer over in the town, and he shall make my will. He will think me daft, no doubt; but after all, why will it not be a wise one? I will tell him I leave my little house here, and its bit of land, and the shop—all to that person who comes first and discovers me dead, with a solemn charge that they take kind and tender care of Manty."

"And about the annuity, and the secret—I will write it all out, with a deed of gift of all the money

there to whoever can claim to be the heir of my will. I will write the true story of Manty, and I will hide these papers somewhere, with the trust that heaven will send the right one to find it out, at the right time. What better can I do? And then I may rest in peace, for surely this was not a common dream. I'll call over Dorothy from the farm to mind Manty, and I'll get the farmer to take me to the town, and see the lawyer myself."

And having thus satisfied herself, Dame McNeal put on her shawl, and, locking the door of the little cot, she turned into the path worn across the field in a meandering line, and finally paused at the farmhouse kitchen door.

Scarcely an hour afterwards Dorothy, a stout-armed, red-cheeked peasant girl, was established up in a room behind the shop, blowing soap-bubbles with hearty good will for Manty, and Dame McNeal was jogging off in the farmer's wagonette towards Brecon. It was a slow and tedious ride; but while yet the sun was two hours high they drove along the picturesque promenade which follows the gently gliding Uek under the old town walls.

Many vehicles were here, driving slowly that the occupants might enjoy the pure air and the noble range of mountain scenery. Dame McNeal's eyes wandered listlessly from one glittering equipage to another, but suddenly she gave a nervous start, a crimson spot flashed into her hollow cheek, her eyes glittered, and she bent forward eagerly. It was not that the carriage was one of the costliest Brecon had ever seen, that the prancing horses were perfect specimens of equine strength and grace, that the footman was in a livery of velvet and gold. None of these things saw Nannie McNeal, but only the lady's face, only the face of the lady who sat amidst those luxurious appointments, beautiful, grand, and haughty as a Cleopatra, but with too lofty an expression to have ever suggested so light, artful, and unworthy a character.

There was no brown veil, hat, or shrouding cloak. A dainty French bonnet, with a wavy cascade of white plume on one side, a costly scarlet Indian shawl, and flowing silk skirts made up the lady's costume, and one white gloved hand played carelessly with the richly-carved ivory handle of a sparkling jet-embroidered parasol.

Yet Nannie McNeal caught her breath sharply, and spoke with sudden, vehement authority to the driver.

"Stop a bit, lad. Whist, stop this moment. I must speak to yonder lady. She may think me daft, but I must speak to yon lady."

The lad drew up right in the way of the elegant equipage, and Dame McNeal, heedless of the amazed look of the coachman and footman, scrambled nimbly down from her high seat in the open wagonette, and hurried to the side of the splendid lady.

"Please, my lady, forgive me, for I do not mean to be impertinent. I must e'en speak with you. I must ask your name. For I dreamt of you last night, and saw you so plainly, so plainly, my lady, that to-day when I look upon your beautiful face, it seems as if I had known you all my life."

There was an earnest simplicity in the homely, rugged features, and honesty in the voice, which was not without effect with the beautiful lady.

"My name," she said, in a gentle, interested voice, "is Hester Lloyd. Is there any way in which I can be of service to you?"

Nannie McNeal shook her head slowly, with a blind perplexed look on her face.

"Lloyd—Lloyd," repeated she, "it is a name I know nothing about. I cannot catch the meaning. But it was your face I saw. Let me look it over again."

And the keen, bright eyes travelled slowly, yearningly over the fair countenance. The footman secretly marvelled at the haughty Miss Lloyd's patience and good humour.

"There is good in it, beneath the pride," muttered Nannie; "there is a high soul behind that broad forehead, which will not stoop to an unworthy deed."

Hester Lloyd flushed rosy with secret pleasure, such as no lover's honied compliment had yet brought to her imperious spirit.

"You dreamt about me? What did you dream?—how very strange!"

Singularly enough, her usual cool judgment and rather cynical disposition never once suggested that the woman was an impostor, seeking to work upon her curiosity and vanity for selfish purposes.

"I dreamed that you came to finish my work. Heaven's blessing be upon you if you do it well!"

"Your work?" repeated Miss Lloyd, retreating a little farther into the velvet cushions, and eyeing the woman questioningly for a sign of mental aberration.

"Aye, it is strange enough. It is a puzzle for me as well as you. But mind you, young lady, if loss, or

trouble, or great grief comes to you—it seems impossible, not more likely for the clouds to fall—but this life has its changes that pass belief—if it comes, you will know that to come this way, farther on, to the four roads that part midway between Brecknock and Glamorgan counties, at the cottage of one Dame Nan McNeal waits an humble home, but a safe one, and honest, worthy work, such as a grand soul, like yours even, need not scorn, a home, and I will not say, but a little fortune."

There was an almost solemn impressiveness in the old woman's face and voice.

Hester Lloyd gazed about her in a daze of surprise and perplexity.

"And you are willing to promise a stranger this? How very strange! My good woman, if such a time comes—"

She paused to smile in conscious pride of the safety of the great and immaculate merchant's daughter from such a sorry pass.

"You may be sure I will come to you, and you must give me welcome."

Nannie McNeal shook her head slowly.

"You must come," said she; "but if the dream be true my lips will be dumb. Take my parting blessing, and this charge—be gentle and tender to the unfortunate, and search diligently in time of any great need for hidden help."

She pulled her black silk hood farther over her face, made a respectful peasant courtesy, and hurried back to the wagonette, and left the elegant carriage to pursue its way in peace, without once turning round to look at it.

Miss Lloyd, on the contrary, kept her head turned, watching the humble vehicle until it was out of sight. She left Brecon the next day; had only paused to rest the horses for the journey back to London. This trip was one of the eccentricities at which people ventured to marvel, but never to disapprove. Every midsummer the great London merchant and his daughter made a journey in their private carriage across the kingdom, now in one direction, and then in another.

It happened that Scotland was well expounded by a continuation of visits, and a little business at Morthyr Tydril had decided Mr. Lloyd to visit Wales and Glamorgan county. This little circumstance, and Nannie McNeal's singular dream, had brought about the peculiar incident of a first and last earthly meeting between the great London heiress and the humble mistress of the roadside shop, the mysterious protectress of the innocent and unfortunate Manty.

#### CHAPTER IV.

LYLE HALL was in a ferment of delight and expectancy. The lord and master, after a three years' absence abroad, was coming home.

The agent of the property, and occasionally the butler, or the housekeeper, had received regular letters from him, posted now at St. Petersburg, now at Constantinople, and Smyrna, giving terse, comprehensive instructions in all matters pertaining to his business affairs, and requiring, in return, a full account of all the details of their several departments.

Several valuable and profitable improvements had been made, according to his suggestion, which had already doubled his income. The old, careless, improvident, and too often dishonest management had also been done away with, how or exactly, by what method, they could not tell, but they had all learned that, though roaming afar in foreign lands, the master's eye followed their movements.

Luke Morton shook his gray head, by no means in dissatisfaction, but with a certain dubiousness, and confided to Mistress Erme, the housekeeper, confidentially.

"His lordship has turned quite into another person, that's certain. They do say it matters little how wild this noble blood may run, after a certain time it steadies down, and does the name credit. Aweel! it's good luck for Lyle Hall that the master's has been so early cured. He shows the wisdom of an old head, and by St. George, there's never been a Lyle before who had the wit to see how that old morass could be turned into such a profitable investment; nor so sharp to know when and where the cheating begins. There was that rascal, Perkins, he was growing rich out of his fraud, and for two years, it did seem as if his lordship had no care nor knowledge how the deceitful scamp was training, nor what became of the old Lyle gold, so that he could have his madcap carousings, and riotous trainings. Aweel! he must have had his eyes open all the time. See how, when he turned around, three years ago, the first sign of it was a summing up of Perkins' accounts, and a cool statement of the discrepancies, and then the quiet dismissal. And then all the other villains had to follow suit. Well, well, I do so long to get a look at his lordship's face, it almost seems I can tell then what it was changed



him. I do wish poor old Hawkins could have lived to see the change. No offence to you, Mistress Erne, whom better than we call a model house-keeper, but then, you know, she had been serving at the Hall all her life, and would ha' given it, any time, rather than seen Lord Cuthbert as he used to be."

Mistress Erne, who was a spinster rather beyond middle age, nodded her appreciation of Luke's good meaning.

"And so am I anxious to see the master. He must have a kindly heart, or he never would have pensioned off those old servants into comfortable homes of their own. He is handsome, too, if his face be like the picture in the gallery."

"Aye, he was handsome enough, handsome enough for a young Lucifer, even when he used to come tearing out of the dining-room, after a midnight carouse, his blue eyes all ablaze, his fair face flushed, and those bright curls of his tumbled all over his forehead. I used to mind, then, that he was handsome through it all. But there are to be no more such times, if the signs show truth. Heaven be praised! it's better luck for Lyle Hall!"

"I wish I knew something about his tastes," pursued Mistress Erne, meditatively. "If I thought it would please him, I would have the house decorated. Was he fond of flowers?"

"I don't think he was. At any rate he never seemed to mind anything about them. But there's no harm in pleasing yourself, he couldn't help seeing it was done from good will, whether he liked the looks or not."

"It does seem as if there ought to be some sort of demonstration, when a master comes to his home, after so long time spent in foreign lands. I might have the great entrance arched over with flowers and evergreens. It would show good feeling, as you say. I want to please him. I should be sorry to lose the situation. It's likely there'll be very different times after he comes. Young people for visitors, and gay doings, and maybe, before long, a new mistress here."

And the worthy spinster drew a long and anxious sigh.

"I suppose that's the natural course of things," responded Luke, very solemnly, "however, there's one comfort, we shall not be kept long in suspense. He will be here to-morrow. And as to the demonstration, you know the tenantry are going to meet the coach when it comes from the station, and the bells are to be rung, and Sir Charles Worthey, they do say, is going to meet him too. The old quarrel has been made up, by my lord Cuthbert's handsome apology to his former guardian. And one must own, it is very well done in his lordship."

It was an eventful day for the Lyle tenantry and household, therefore, and a thrilling moment, when the express train delivered up its august passenger at the Lyle station. Hundreds of curious eyes saw the tall, symmetrical figure which stepped out composedly upon the platform, followed by a foreign-looking valet, with his arms full of wraps and bundles, and a shout went up from as many eager voices—a hearty, English welcome.

Lord Cuthbert turned quickly, and they all saw a handsome face, bronzed a little by exposure, but with clear-cut features, firmly closed lips, and deep blue eyes. He pulled off his hat, showing the brown, crisp-curling hair, and bowed to the right and the left, smiling rather nervously, a close observer might have suspected, but there were none there to watch closely, because of their own eager excitement. His face had flushed at first, but as he passed on to the carriage it grew paler.

Sir Charles Worthey, mounted on his gallant hunter, was waiting there, and watched for the young lord's recognition without disguising his interest. It almost seemed that Lord Cuthbert had failed to perceive him, for, after a rapid glance around, he moved forward towards the gaily trimmed carriage, whose pawing horses seemed to share the general enthusiasm.

Luke Morton had remained at home to head the retinue, and give the hall reception, but James Watson, the new agent, who had never met his employer, according to the order in the brief despatch, was waiting, and stepped forward, bowing respectfully.

"Watson?" said Lord Cuthbert, questioningly. "Yes, your lordship. I hope to see you well, sir," replied Watson, and then he added, hesitatingly in a low voice: "Sir Charles, sir—your lordship does not see Sir Charles Worthey waiting?"

Lord Cuthbert turned quickly, and taking in at once the identity of the portly horseman, hastened to his side with extended hand.

"My dear Sir Charles, I beg your pardon. I did not see you before. My thoughts were abstracted—a little agitated, possibly. I did not expect this crowd. It was very kind and generous of you to come to meet me."

Sir Charles shook the proffered hand warmly, while he said, in his hearty fashion:

"Welcome back, my lad! You've grown into a man, for certain, in these three years, and a man we're not ashamed of, that's the best of it! I should like to send all our young fellows off to the East, if they will come home as much improved. You look natural, and yet not natural."

"I trust you will have no farther cause to complain of me," continued Lord Cuthbert, dropping his eyes, and speaking in a low, and slightly husky voice. "You are coming with me, of course, to Lyle Hall."

"No, oh, no. I shall call over soon with the ladies; but I'm not going to intrude upon you to-day. It's a blessed conviction for me, Cuthbert, lad, that you have come home, able and worthy to be the master there."

"Thank you, thank you, Sir Charles. I wish—I hope everybody will look upon the former Lord Cuthbert as dead and gone, and lay up no account of the follies that have been. I am another person, I assure you of it."

"I've no doubt of it, not in the least, lad. You ran wild, as young fellows are apt to do, and you fell into bad hands. One only needs to look into your face to see it—why, the expression is changed entirely. No, no, Cuthbert, the whole county is prepared to take you at your future behaviour, and that they expect to be something pretty handsome. Good morning, Cuthbert. My good fellows, let's have it once more, before I go. Three hearty cheers for the welcome return of the Lord of Lyle!"

Hurrah, hurrah, hurrah!

It was given with a right good will, and the very sky seemed to ring with the echoes. Then Sir Charles galloped off, and Lord Cuthbert entered the coach, and the procession filed along on either side, and as they came in sight of the gray tower of the hall, the church bells pealed out a merry chime. And at the avenue gateway there was a triumphal arch, and the great doorway had half its antique carvings hidden with wreathing evergreens and drooping flowers.

His lordship was evidently deeply moved. He bowed and smiled, and now and then returned some simple word in answer to a hearty, outspoken greeting; but his cheek was pale, his smile evidently constrained, and his hand was cold, as ice when he extended it to give kindly greetings to Luke Morton, who spoke hastily his formal speech.

"He feels badly over the old times!" exclaimed Luke, when at last he got away into the servants' hall. "I could see, all the time, that he was thinking about that. He was a great deal easier and heartier with the new servants, those he had never seen. Did any of you mind that? It was almost as if he was ashamed, and humiliated, and asking my pardon. Bless his heart, does he think we are bold enough, and ungrateful enough to lay up things against him?"

Mistress Erne was very much delighted. She came flying out from a renewed charge to the cook, and shook hands all around in her relief.

"Oh, I am sure I think he is splendid. So kind and good, with being so grand and dignified. I am sure I never can believe of him those things that I have heard. He is more noble-looking than his picture."

"His hair isn't so golden as it used to be, nor his complexion so fair. And it almost seemed his eyes used to be bluer, and he's lost that free and off-hand way. But three years of foreign life, and such a change in a man himself, would be likely to work greater wonders."

"I am sure I should have known him anywhere," interposed William Blake, one of the old forasters, who had come into the servants' hall with the others. "I wonder if he will remember how I taught him to use a gun."

"It isn't likely he forgets anything; but perhaps it's better for us not to say a word about the old times. Somehow he seems to me like a new character, and I think he would rather we should take him so," replied Luke.

"Aye, Morton," said one of the footmen, "that's what I thought. Did you mind how, when you asked if he would have his old rooms, he said 'no, as quick and sharp as could be?'"

"To be sure I did. And then I told him the green suite, was always called the pleasantest, and he said he would have that. But when they went upstairs he was walking right over to the crimson room, if his valet hadn't told him different. He's abstracted and absent-minded, that's plain."

"And who wouldn't be?" cried out the house-keeper, "poor man! just think of coming into a great house like this, and finding in it no mother or father, neither sister nor brother. It would make the gayest a bit down-hearted. I am sure my heart bled for him just now, when I took a look upstairs and

found the gallery door open. He was standing there looking at his father's portrait, and there was a wistful look of pain in his eyes that touched me sorely."

"Well, it will be his own fault if he don't bring pleasant times back to the old hall. A pretty wife will console him for the lack of a mother. And sure, the Lord of Lyle can take his pick anywhere," jocosely remarked one of the younger men. "Soon may we be drinking health to her ladyship!"

While the servants were thus gossiping down below, Lord Cuthbert, the newly returned master, was, as the housekeeper had said, standing in the portrait gallery before the picture of the late Lord Mordaunt. He had set the Swiss valet at work over the portmanteau, getting out his dinner attire, and escaped himself into the broad hall, whose open doors revealed the several apartments. He approached the picture gallery once, and then retreated, but in a moment after, with a look on his pale face which showed he had nerved himself to some resolute determination, he went in. The pictures were all labelled, and as he passed from one to another, he bent his head, and read whatever was printed on the embossed and gilded cards.

A man with but little vanity, might have been excused for lingering over his own picture, had the limner's art produced such a gem as was the latest and freshest portrait in the gallery; but the newly returned master of Lyle Hall passed by impatiently the spirited painting of the handsome youth, with his hand on the neck of a magnificent chestnut horse, and lingered, and lingered, looking wistfully, sorrowfully, and it almost seemed remorsefully upon the pictured faces of the parents who slept, unmoved by his coming hither, under the sculptured marble of the Lyle sarcophagus.

He knew when Mistress Erne looked in, and retreated in a flutter, though he did not seem aware of it, and the next moment passed back quietly to his dressing-room, and submitted himself to his valet's care.

Then came the formal dinner, arranged with as much pains as if there had been twenty guests.

His lordship sat down in the state dining-room, and tried his best to do justice to the perfection of the whole hall's culinary art, and praised everything. But old Luke, who stood behind his chair in the full glory of a new apron of immaculate hue, knew that he only trifled with the food.

"It's a great pity, Luke, that I hadn't Sir Charles here," he said, with an evident effort at friendliness, "this is too good a dinner to be lost on one solitary person. I see very plainly I shall not need to blush when I invite guests to the hall."

"Thank you, thank you, my lord. Everyone will be sure to do their best in your service if you shall please to continue us. Shall I pour you sherry or claret?"

Luke asked this last with a slight tremor of voice. He knew what the first glass had heralded in the old days.

But Lord Cuthbert had gone again into one of his abstracted dreams, and answered, bitterly:

"Either, it doesn't matter."

And then looking up, and seeing the perplexed look on the old servant's face, he bit his lip, and spoke hastily:

"Luke, old fellow, don't be afraid for me. I won't have any wine at all. It's as well for you to understand that the past is past—dead, you know," here he shivered just a little, "and we begin new from to-day. It is as well that all the others in the household should understand that I greatly prefer that there shall be no reference to old ways, or habits, or tastes. You understand, we begin new for to-day."

Luke bowed almost to the floor.

"I will take care, your lordship," he replied, scarcely knowing what else was to be said.

And then presently his lordship pushed back the plate of nuts, and the silver basket of golden oranges and pearly grapes, dropped his napkin, and rose, with a parting word to the servant, and strayed off into the library, where he knew his new agent was waiting with the accounts for his inspection.

Luke Morton stood still looking after him full five minutes, then he lifted his hand slowly to his forehead and pushed back the iron-gray locks, while he muttered:

"It is odd what a queer feeling comes over me! I can't make it out that it is the same man. Well, well, it is a change for the better."

And he set back the brimming wineglass, and laughed as he added:

"It was not one bottle nor two in the old days. He can't help one's thoughts from going back, though he may bridle the tongue. And it's plain we are to have a master at last. So there's no chance for complaint."

That master sat a good hour with his agent, listening to the statement of the general management of affairs. He did not offer many interruptions; but

when he spoke, his words were pertinent to the matter in hand, and his few suggestions were wise and valuable ones.

He drew a sigh of relief, however, when after receiving the noble owner's approbation, the agent gathered up his books and papers, and took leave. There were half-a-dozen others with similar reports. His lordship went through the whole patiently, and also accompanied one of the men over the hall estate, to look at the improvements. On the return he stopped at the stables, and his eagle eye went over the row of sleek, finely-formed animals.

"Your lordship is looking for King John," said the ostler, smiling; "there he is, behind the gray."

"Yes," returned Lord Cuthbert, walking down behind the stalls, and looking with interest at the fierce, magnificent chestnut creature, who was pawing impatiently at the sound of voices.

"I do believe he knows your lordship, the rascal hasn't been used enough to take down his pride; but I tried to keep him in good condition, knowing how fond your lordship was of him."

"The creature has almost human wits, I am persuaded," said the noble owner, walking back abruptly; "saddle him by-and-bye. I don't know of anything that will rest me like a good gallop."

And then he returned to the house, and went down into the servant's hall, where he had ordered there should be plenty of good cheer to celebrate the master's return. And he listened patiently, and responded kindly to the well-meant but rather prosy speeches there; and when it was over he ordered King John, put on his hat, and ran down the steps with the first show, Luke said, of the old Lord Cuthbert's eagerness.

By this time it was evening, and a growing moon lent its peculiar charm to the starry sky.

"Lord Cuthbert had got a little out of his old skilfulness in the saddle," said the ostler, looking after him; "he always sat like a part of the horse, but then it was only natural. Out of practice, of course, for these three years back."

His lordship meantime rode at a good pace down the avenue, and once out upon the road, out there in the cool, fresh evening air, under the stars, but with no human eye watching him, he drew a long, long breath, and flung his hand upwards. All the day's tension of will, the stern control of muscle, the forced composure of mind found relief in that simple gesture. He turned his face to the cool wind with yearning eagerness. He drank in the silence, the dark, and the coolness, as an imprisoned wretch might rapturously inhale the blessed light and warmth of day. For a little time he had no consciousness of whither he was turning, only rejoicing in his freedom from restraint and espionage.

But presently, at the diverging roads, he looked about him eagerly and scrutinisingly, and recognising the locality, he turned his horse to the right, settled himself more closely to the saddle, and crossing his heels into the glossy flanks, he muttered:

"On with you, King John. Show me your boasted mettle; you shall take me six miles and more without a pause."

That six miles ended in a snug little village, and under the great elm tree in the blended starlight and moonlight he could see the great swinging sign of the "Boar's Head," reaching far out from an extended limb over the heads of the passers by. But he did not look at it, his eyes were turned farther to the right, to a gabled cottage roof peeping out from a half circle of fir trees.

Did Lord Cuthbert Lyle's eager eyes brim over with tears, that he so suddenly raised a hand and dashed it across his cheek?

He rode far enough into the inn yard to call a stable-boy and give his horse into his charge for half-an-hour, as he said carelessly, and then he turned and walked back to the street.

"I'd like to see the gem-man's face," quoth Tom, rubbing his hand against the wet sides of King John. "A stranger in these parts, I reckon, but he's got a stunner of a horse, and he's put him to his paces, too."

The owner meanwhile had gone straight and swiftly towards the gabled cottage, but he did not pass in at the gate. He put one hand upon the rear iron fencing, and vaulted lightly over, and went on towards the house over the garden beds, screened by the tall shrubs, and occasional trees, and coming upon the side windows of the cosy, but simple and inexpensive cottage.

A soft glow illuminated three of these windows, and, according to an old custom, the curtains were not lowered. There was no possibility of anyone looking in from the street, and from their own garden what unworthy spying could come? Cautiously and stealthily this unsuspected intruder crept towards the windows, and established himself against a tall trellis, heavy with the sweet honeysuckle sprays which twisted in and out its lattice-

work, and then his yearning eyes seemed to seize upon, rather than behold the picture so unconsciously yielded up to him.

He saw a pleasant room, furnished simply, and yet with taste and beauty. Flowers in hanging baskets, drooping from vases, wreathing in every odd little nook. Pictures bright, and cheery, and well chosen; a bookcase filled with books. But little heed he gave to these, beyond the first swift glance, which proved that it was not a home of want and poverty. The central group around the small oval table, where a soft illumination from the astral lamp revealed every feature, rivetted and held his attention. First a woman beyond middle life, but with a face as fair and placid as an infant's, a woman in a snowy muslin cap, in a black silk dress, sitting in the rocking-chair, knitting. He lost not an item of her dress, not an expression of her face, and when presently she rose and crossed the room, coming back with a workbasket, he clasped his hands in a sort of sobbing ecstasy, and murmured:

"Walking! really, veritably walking! Oh! can I doubt—can I regret?"

It was a long time before his gloating, greedy eyes could leave this figure. His broad chest was heaving, the veins stood out like cords on his forehead, his hands unconsciously clenched a rigid grasp upon the senseless board of the trellis. All the passion, and power, and emotion of his nature seemed to have passed into that yearning gaze. But shortly two other figures, that had been half out of his range of vision, came forward to the light, and claimed attention. Very sweet and fair looked Kitty Cartwright, with her fair face, and bright eyes, and rose-hued cheeks, and the shower of glossy brown curls rippling around her white throat. She was saying something arch and merry, he knew it, by the old trick of the curling lip and the roguish toss of the head. The serene-faced mother looked up to smile back fondly, and the other—who could she be? when before had he looked upon a face so wondrously perfect, and yet so full of queenly dignity?

The unsuspected gazer watched the group with keenest interest. He saw the unknown lady lift a playful finger threatening the roguish Kitty, and he knew, without beholding the flash of the diamonds glittering there, that it was someone of high estate, and lofty station. And yet he marvelled the more he gazed, who it could be, and why she was there, on such familiar terms, with those so much beneath her own station.

He heard a carriage come rolling up the little avenue, and draw up before the door, but he did not stir. He could not lose a single change in the little drama he was watching. The carriage had come for the lady. He saw Kitty bring her hat and shawl. He scarcely breathed while the beautiful stranger knelt down with a playful smile, but yet an earnest grace, and received a good-night kiss from the saintly woman. He watched the parting embrace of the two girls, and hushed his very breathing as he heard the pure girlish voices coming out to the little portico.

"Now, Kitty, dear, you know I shall send for you for my little party. Don't go all back to those absurd scruples, as soon as I am gone, and leave me to argue it all over. Insist upon having you. You will spoil all my pleasure, if you do not come to the party."

"How high bred, and yet gracious! how noble and good!" mentally ejaculated the listener by the honeysuckle trellis; "who can she be? My heart has gone out to her already, she is the one peerless queen who can rule my thoughts. Already I think I adore her. Who can she be?"

"I can endure a great deal, I am sure, for the sake of adding to your pleasure," replied Kitty, "and if you really insist, I suppose I shall come. But I can hear already the astonished and sneering remarks your noble and aristocratic friend will make. You, who have established such a reputation for haughty exclusiveness, for indomitable pride, to be taking up, and bringing forward, a little nobody like me. Indeed, I sha'n't blame them for talking. It is perfectly marvellous to me."

"Now, you are ungenerous to me," returned the clear, rich voice. "I seize upon you, just because you are one of my idols, just a character which carries out its own ideal. My exclusiveness is not that of wealth. What is gold but dress? It is of character. I am proud of my father's name, because it stands high in the world, and no foul breath can harm it, no idle hand assail it. I am exclusive only as to character. I will have refined, earnest, and sincere natures with me, or I will walk alone in my own integrity. I want no imperfect, warped, and halting spirits. That is all. But we won't argue our old battles over, out here in the evening air. I believe the world and its people might be perfect, and you

are willing to have charity towards everything and everybody. But you are my darling, Kitty, and you are coming to my little fête. Good-night, dear!"

"Good-night!"

Kitty returned to the house, and sat down on a footstool at her mother's knee, with a pensive look on her face. They seemed to be talking gravely, and to fall presently into some close, personal topic, which must have moved them both, for Kitty's eyes required her handkerchief, and the mother lifted hers with a fervent, solemn renunciation in them, to a picture which he had not noticed before, a picture wreathed about with ivy growing from a wicker-basket beneath. The gazer's heart seemed to melt within him. The picture was the likeness of a young and handsome man, that same man who had gone forth to Switzerland with such earnest hopes, as a noble lord's secretary.

Lord Cuthbert Lyle struck his hand fiercely against his breast, lifted his pallid, anguished face upward to the silent beauty of the sky, that was dumb, un-answering, and then, spreading out his arms towards the window as in solemn benediction, he slipped back, made his way across the garden, gained the highway, and the inn, threw the gaping boy a bright silver piece, leaped upon the saddle, and putting King John to the top of his speed, went galloping off, back to Lyle Hall, and its solitary grandeur.

(To be continued.)

#### BUSTS PLACED IN THE HOTEL DE VILLE, PARIS.

—Busts in marble of Queen Victoria and the late Prince Consort, the Emperor of Russia, the King of Bavaria, and the Sultan, all of whom have visited the fine old building of Henry IV. since 1854, have recently been placed in the galleries of the Hotel de Ville.

THE HOURS OF MARRIAGE.—The Archbishop of York, in a recent speech at St. James's-hall, said that a man could not be married after 12 o'clock in the day, because the legislature considered that such a sacred contract as marriage ought to be entered into in a sober and serious way, and that the enactment was connected with the vice of drunkenness, of which he had been speaking. But this statement was not quite correct. It is true that, unless a man goes to the expense of a special licence, which will permit him to be married at any hour and at any place, he must, according to law, be married between the hours of 8 and 12 o'clock in the forenoon; and a clergyman celebrating a marriage at other hours than these (unless by special licence) does so "upon pain of suspension, or felony, with transportation for fourteen years" (4 Geo. IV., cap. 76, sec. 21). Here is a hint for novelists, who might depict an innocent Mr. Robert Penfold under a new aspect. The modern law for the solemnisation of marriages between the hours of 8 and 12 in the morning, dates from the bill passed by Chancellor Hardwicke, March 25, 1754, for the suppression of that iniquitous system known as Fleet Marriages. Eighty-nine persons, denizens of the Fleet, are mentioned by Mr. Burn, in his *History of Fleet Marriages*, as playing this trade; and at certain taverns a person was retained, at a pound a week, as a necessary member of the establishment, in order that he might celebrate clandestine and unlicensed unions. Touts were also kept to induce couples to patronise their employer's tavern. Walpole tells us how Henry Fox, afterwards Lord Holland, was married in this clandestine way to Lady Caroline Lennox, eldest daughter of the Duke of Richmond. Many of the nobility, including the Marquis of Annandale, Viscount Sligo, Lord Banfil, Lord Abergavenny, Sir Marmaduke Gresham, Hon. John Bourke, afterwards Lord Mayo, and Lord Montague, afterwards Duke of Manchester, resorted to Fleet parsons for the celebration of the nuptial ceremony. The evils of such a system are apparent, but the drunkenness that frequently accompanied such marriages was not the cause that led to the change in the law, and the Archbishop of York's argument was, therefore, in this particular, based on an error. Horace Walpole, in writing to Mr. Conway on the 22nd of May, 1753, correctly describes the bill that made Fleet marriages illegal as being drawn up and passed for "preventing clandestine marriages." The drunkenness was no more a feature of such marriages than it was at Greta Green unions or still is in the Black country and many English districts, and, more especially, in the western Highlands of Scotland, where, at the present day, decent couples frequently go to the Lowlands to be married, in order to avoid the great expense that the large consumption of whisky would impose upon them if they were married in their own parish. But this drunkenness at weddings had nothing to do with the law that makes a man be married between eight and twelve in the morning; unless he prefers to spend 50*l.* for the ceremony being performed in the evening in his own drawing-room.





[THE MANTILLA.]

## THE ENCHANTRESS.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"The Village Diogenes," "The Tambourine Girl," &c., &c.

### CHAPTER XII.

LEAVING Naples, with her palaces, convents, and churches, we will now cast a glance at a stately old palazzo, leagues distant. The setting sun gilded the towers and battlements of the ducal palace, as a tall form, clad in monkish garments, toiled up the noble hill, which it crowned like some superb diadem. The carriage road, which the pedestrian was treading, was paved with stone flags; and, as he entered, he had passed through a gateway, with massive lions crouched on either hand. The avenue was bordered with evergreen hedges, urns and statuary, and here and there a rustic seat invited to repose.

As the monk proceeded, new beauties broke upon his view at every step—now an orange grove, now a mimic lake, lying clear and tranquil in the waning light; now the waters of some exquisitely-sculptured fountain shot upward, and fell into a basin of marble or jasper; now some laughing stream came dancing over the rocks; and now he perceived a Moresque temple, or a long arbour, draped with heavy vines. The palace itself was a most imposing old pile, and had descended from one generation to another, each adding its own embellishments to the palazzo and the surrounding grounds.

At length the monk paused at the threshold, and his rather impatient summons was at once answered. At sight of that tall figure, the servant bowed and asked:

"What is wanted, reverend father?"

"Is your master, the duke, at home?" said the monk.

"Yes—he has just returned from yonder village."

"Can I see him?" queried the guest.

"I think so," and the servant moved away; and presently reappeared, and conducted the monk into the palace.

A tall, elderly gentleman, bearing a strong resemblance to Vittorio Castinelli, sat in an arm-chair near the *brassero* when the monk entered; and glancing at the unexpected guest, he said:

"Be seated, father—when you are rested, I must ask if I can be of any service."

"My lord," rejoined a deep-toned voice, "I am no monk—I must see you in private!"

"Who—who are you?" demanded the duke.

"Jacapo the Jew; and though you are a duke, I hold you in my power."

"Hush, hush!" exclaimed the noble, "you will be overheard—wait till I conduct you to a more secluded room."

The Jew nodded assent, and a few moments afterwards found himself in the library.

The seeming monk removed his cowl, and the dark, inscrutable face of the Jew was revealed.

"Ah!" exclaimed Jacapo, with a sardonic smile, "I see I am no welcome guest!"

"That I confess," responded the duke; "upon my word, I hoped that I should never meet you more, for the sight of you recalls unpleasant events. What brings you here now?"

"My lord," resumed Jacapo, uttering the title with a certain mock deference, "I must have more gold!"

The duke started back in dismay, and his brow knit as he exclaimed:

"How remorseless you are—twice I have paid you heavy bribes to seal your lips, and now you are not satisfied."

The old Jew gazed searchingly at his companion, and said:

"You like wealth, rank, and power—you like this old ducal palace—remember the secret, and be wise."

There was a long and painful silence, during which the noble reflected on his past life, and bitter memories came thronging, phantom-like, upon him. How, oh, how could he bear the revelation of the secret, of which the old Jew had gained possession? At that hour he felt like a coward in the presence of the man who stood there so stern and vindictive, and he exclaimed:

"Jacapo, I am at your mercy—you know it, and take advantage of your power! You have already extorted sums which ought to satisfy you, and seal your lips with eternal silence."

"The choice is your own," replied the Jew, remorselessly; "accede to my demands, or the secret is revealed."

"No, no; that must not be," cried the duke; "how much more do you require?"

"Ten thousand ducats," replied Jacapo.

"Ten thousand ducats!" echoed the nobleman; "you will make a poor man of me yet!"

The Jew listened in grim silence, but a sudden gleam shot into the dark, mysterious eyes bent on the tessellated floor of the library, and the firm compression of his lips boded no good to the duke, should he fail to comply.

"Jacapo," resumed the nobleman, "I already know you too well to risk a refusal of your demands. I have lately drawn a sum of money, with which I can meet your claim, but when this is paid you must give me a solemn promise not to molest me more."

As he spoke, he moved to a richly-carved *ecritoire*, and from a compartment took a heavy purse.

With a thrill of exultation, Jacapo grasped the heavy purse, counted its contents, and thrusting it among the folds of his cassock, said:

"It is well, my lord, you have acted with wisdom."

"And now," exclaimed the duke, "give me your promise."

The Jew acceded, resumed his cowl, and the noble's valet guided him to the door.

When he had left the palazzo, he hastened down the broad avenue, passed through the gate, which a warder opened for his egress, and took his way to the nearest *osteria*.

### CHAPTER XIII.

THE carnival had passed, with its quaint masquerading, and all its wild excitement, and spring had come, bringing brightness and bloom to that fair southern clime. The hills and valleys were green as emerald with soft grass, and over the distant slopes shepherds might be seen guiding their flocks, while huge, white oxen went toiling by, or cropped the herbage, gathered by some dark-eyed peasant boy. The jasmine, the myrtle, and the cyclamen once more unfolded their petals; the orange, the peach, the almond, and the fig again waved their blossoms in the sunshine; luxuriant grape-vines trailed in graceful festoons from tree to tree, and the meadows were all aflame with wild poppies. The bay of Naples seemed more beautiful than ever, as it tossed its glowing waves in the sunlight; fishermen again went skimming across its bright waters, and peasant women and children lounged on the sands. Ischia and Capri seemed to woo the voyager with their picturesque beauty, and families returned to the pleasant villas, which had been deserted during the winter. The last week in Lent came, and the numerous churches of Naples were thronged with worshippers.

According to Romish custom, the decorations of these splendid edifices were removed, and not even the bells were rung, solemn rituals were performed, and sad, soul-thrilling music wafted from the choir. Easter Sunday dawned, bright and beautiful, and the bells once more echoed out on the soft breeze, calling to morning prayer. At the appointed hour the Montaldi family entered the grand old cathedral at Naples. In ages long since gone by this church had been a heathen temple, and hero pagan priests had performed their mystic rites. A friend visiting at the palazzo had been very desirous to see the far-famed St. January's Chapel, and thither they bent their steps.

Passing through the superb gate, on which so much time and labour had been expended, they entered the little chapel, with its fine dome, its golden altar, crusted with gems, its costly busts, and the silver tabernacle, where precious relics are treasured, while tall wax tapers gleamed on the costly shrine, and shed their light over the other adornments of the chapel. For a time the Montaldi party remained gazing at the splendours gathered there, and then took their way back to the body of the cathedral. Rare pictures looked down from the lofty walls; superb statuary, which might have cost some old master the dreams and toil of a life-time gleamed in their white, sculptured beauty in many a niche; the side shrines were loaded with costly offerings to the Madonnas, and patron saints; clouds of fragrant incense went wreathing up from the massive censers, and melted away along the fretted roof; the high altar was all ablaze with wax tapers; and white-robed acolytes, cardinals and priests, whose gorgeous vestments glowed like sunset clouds, came and went around the altar, while the music of the grand old organ, and the rich melody of tuneful voices blent in the stirring strains of the "Te Deum."

The stately cathedral was thronged with a motley crowd, some kneeling at the various shrines, and apparently absorbed in their devotions, and others listening to, and now and then joining in the rites conducted by the priests. Ginevra Montaldi soon recognised Visconti and Castinelli, and she was ere long joined by Alessandro Sanvitale, who continued to pay her the most assiduous attention during the remainder of the service.

Meanwhile, a female figure, with a Spanish mantilla drawn closely about her face, glided along the broad, marble aisle, and knelt before a shrine hard by the Montaldi party. A close observer, however, might have suspected that she was not so earnest a worshipper as many kneeling around, for ever and anon a pair of dark eyes wandered to Ginevra and her companion, and at length, just before the close of the Easter rites, Sanvitale caught a glimpse of the half-veiled face, and started as if a phantom had arisen before him. The expression of the dusky eyes which followed him and the young comtessa filled him with a thousand misgivings, and when the Montaldi party had made their way through the throng, and the young Venetian had handed the ladies to the carriage, he returned to the cathedral in pursuit of the lady, but she had disappeared.

For a few moments he lingered near the portals, but no trace of her could be found. It was in no evadable mood that he left the church, and took his way to the hotel, where he had established himself on his arrival. When that graceful figure had stolen from the cathedral, she was joined by a Neapolitan woman, clad in simple vestments, and with a grave, sad face. Not a word was articulated by either, until they had gained the shelter of a lowly dwelling, with brown walls, and moss-grown roof. Then the spell of silence passed from their lips, and they conversed unrestrainedly.

"It is true, then?" exclaimed the dark-eyed daughter of Venice, Veronica Fiasella. "I cannot doubt the evidence of my own senses, though I would not believe it till now, even when unwelcome rumours reached me in my Venetian home that he was devoted to another. I saw them in the cathedral this morning, and his face was quite sufficient evidence of his interest, his love."

"Yes," replied her companion, "nobody can doubt that, who has marked his attention to the Comtessa Ginevra; indeed, he has followed her like a shadow, and seems bent on winning the prize so many would envy him."

The young girl sprang from the seat, a painful flush crimsoned her face, and her scarlet lips quivered with emotion. At length she paused in her rapid promenade, and said, with wild earnestness:

"Aunt Camilla, there was a time when Alessandro professed to love me better than his life!"

"And yet," replied the woman, gravely, "he is the son of one of the richest old nobles in Venice; it was a sad hour for you when you first met him, for your father is of obscure birth, and his sole wealth is what he and his family earn from day to day on a few acres, so near the city that some of you are often there to sell your wares. Was it not on such an errand that you first met Sanvitale?"

"No—not so," exclaimed Veronica; "he was slowly sailing by in a splendid gondola one morning, when I had been sent forth by my mother to fill a water jar, and he leaped from the boat, filled the jar himself, and bore it into the cottage for me. The table was covered with flowers, which had not been arranged for sale, and glancing at them, and then at me, he said:

"You must be the beautiful flower-girl who has recently appeared in Venice, and whose praises are on every tongue?"

"Ah! you flatter me," was my laughing answer

"But you have of late sold flowers in yonder city," said the stranger. I nodded assent, and he went on to talk extravagantly of my beauty, and, with the hope that we should soon meet again, he left me. That day, and for many succeeding days, when I went to Venice as a flower-girl, and wandered about some of the best quarters of the city, I always met the handsome young noble, and he became a munificent patron. You will not wonder when I tell you that he kept up his flattery—declared that he treasured every flower purchased of me, because they were associated with my image, and, ere long, confessed his love."

"And you believed all this?" observed her aunt. "What a delusion it was! Pray, did you never, never think of the wide difference in your station?"

"Yes, Aunt Camilla. I more than once told him a poor flower-girl was no match for him, and the day might dawn when he would grow weary of the promises which bound us together as betrothed lovers. When I talked in that strain, he would silence me by affirming that love had levelled all these distinctions, and that I was fit to grace any station."

A long pause ensued, and then the girl resumed: "Such was the state of affairs when Alessandro came to Naples; but before he left Venice, he renewed his promises to me, and bade me apply myself diligently to the studies I had commenced, as a neighbour had kindly offered to teach me. For a time, the delusion lasted, but then painful rumours reached me of Sanvitale's devotion to a lady, whose wondrous beauty had given her the title of the star of Naples."

"Ah! that was an hour of trial; I read it in your whole appearance."

"It was indeed," rejoined the girl; "and when time wore on, and he did not return, I resolved to follow him."

"And you have had a year-long journey," said her aunt.

"Yes, yes, Aunt Camilla; sometimes I travelled in the lumbering diligence, and sometimes on foot, and now, here I am in Naples, and have already witnessed his devotion to the beautiful and high-born girl, who has made him forgetful of me."

"Veronica," replied the woman, "will you break your heart for a false lover?"

A low moan echoed through the room, and the girl said, with bitter emphasis:

"You cannot understand my struggle, my dear aunt; but what think you of the lady? Does she return his love?"

"I cannot tell you, child; she has been much in his society; but she has many admirers, and it is rumoured her father is resolved that one of the three nobles, who were all at the cathedral to-day, Visconti, Castinelli, or the faithless Venetian, shall be his daughter's husband, and it is thought Sanvitale believes he has the best chance of success."

"She shall know the truth," exclaimed the girl; "I shall watch for an opportunity, and when a favourable one comes, I shall take advantage of it."

The stranger soon found her way to the stately old palazzo, tenanted by the Montaldi family, and often she hovered around the shadowy courtyard at evening, or followed the ladies as they came forth for a morning walk.

One pleasant spring day, when the Villa Reale was in all its glory, Ginevra Montaldi and her father's ward might have been seen gliding into this resort; the royal palms swayd to and fro in the breeze, which swept up from the bay; the fountains murmured musically, and the rare statues gleamed in the sunlight, and seemed well-nigh ready, like Pygmalion, to tremble into life. The ladies had not proceeded far, when Beatrice met Mazzoni, the sculptor, and took his proffered arm.

A light laugh broke from Ginevra's lips, as she exclaimed:

"Lovers are proverbially the duller of company for other people, and, be assured, I shall take heed how I come to the Villa Reale with you again, Beatrice."

Her friend blushed and smiled, and said, gaily: "Indeed, the star of Naples never need lack an escort."

"No, no," observed a deep-toned, manly voice; and the young Venetian moved forward and joined the group; "there is one at least," he added, "who is always happy to enjoy the charm of your society."

Had the comtessa confessed the truth, she would have found it far more pleasant to have the delightful companionship of Mazzoni's friend Raffaele Rossetti; but as it was, she accepted Sanvitale's attention. For a time they walked arm-in-arm along the broad paths; but at length the young Venetian drew his companion towards a graceful Greek temple, and sat down at her side on a seat near. For a few moments he remained silent, and then said:

"I do not marvel at the pride you Neapolitans

take in the Villa Reale; it is indeed a fairy land, and you," he continued, speaking with deep earnestness, "are fit to be a fairy queen!"

"You are aware," rejoined the lady, "that I do not relish the language of flattery."

"It would be impossible to flatter you," exclaimed the young man; "such beauty wins not only admiration, but love."

"Once more," replied the comtessa, "I must beg to warn you not to address me in such a strain of compliment."

There was a brief silence, and then Ginevra Montaldi resumed:

"To follow out your idea, however, what if I were a fairy queen?"

"Dear, dear lady Ginevra, I should still bring my hand and heart to your shrine, and deem myself happy, indeed, if I could have your love to brighten my future life!"

At this juncture, both heard a loud rustling in a clump of shrubbery, which shaded the walls of the little temple, and the two glanced eagerly around, but nothing was to be seen.

"Hark! what is that?" asked Ginevra Montaldi.

"Perhaps it might have been some bird soaring away from your rose thicket," replied her companion. And they rose, and took their way homeward. Sanvitale felt restless, and ill at ease, for the thought that Veronica had followed him to Naples, and might have been a listener to what had passed in the Villa Reale, filled him with unwelcome fancies.

As he and the comtessa moved from the spot, the sunlight shone full on the recumbent form and upturned face of Veronica Fiasella. Crouched in the shadows of the thicket, she had been a listener to the young Venetian's words; and as memory recalled the hours when his lips had breathed similar professions to her, she sank back senseless.

At length a young student, who was passing in that direction, perceived the prostrate form, and pausing, lifted the fainting girl, and bore her to the nearest fountain. Two or three ladies, who were sitting on the margin of the fountain, seemed quite interested in the beautiful stranger, and their united efforts soon revived her. As consciousness returned, the scene she had witnessed, and the words the Venetian lover had breathed to the beautiful comtessa, came flashing back upon her with painful vividness; and then the thought of those hours, when he had won her heart, awakened a long train of bitter memories. Rising, she moved away, at first with unsteady steps, but gaining strength as she proceeded. Like one in a dream, she reached the home of her Aunt Camilla, and recounted all that had occurred in the Villa Reale. The day dragged slowly by, and the next morning she rose and hurried to the market-place. Threading her way through the various stalls, she at length reached one where flowers were sold. Purchasing a dozen bouquets, she placed them in a wicker basket, lent her by her aunt, left the market, and with nervous eagerness, took her way to the Montaldi palace. On inquiring for the comtessa, she was told that the lady was then engaged in the studio. The girl declared she would wait her appearance, and seated herself in the lofty hall. A half-hour passed, and then the comtessa summoned her to the boudoir. The girl obeyed, and the next moment stood face to face with the belle of Naples.

Ginevra Montaldi bent an earnest, admiring gaze on the pretty flower-girl, and purchased her entire stock.

"Thank you," exclaimed Veronica, "it seems you are as generous as rumour declares you. But, lady, I have had a double purpose in this visit."

"What can it be?" replied the comtessa, "I am all anxiety to hear."

"Well then, I wish to ask you a single question!"

"Go on," rejoined the lady.

"Do you love the gentleman who was your escort yesterday in the Villa Reale, Alessandro Sanvitale?"

"Oh! give me a truthful answer, I implore you!"

"No—and thus I have assured him," rejoined the comtessa; "there was a time, I confess, when for certain reasons, I endeavoured to return his love, but it was all in vain—I could not give him my heart!"

"Strange—strange!" exclaimed the girl. "Alessandro Sanvitale is so handsome, so fascinating, that it seems most singular to me he should not have succeeded in winning your love."

The speaker paused, hesitated a few moments, and then resumed:

"Oh, lady! I should have been far happier if I could say the same, for he won my love, only to cast it aside when he met you."

"And who—who are you?" asked the comtessa, earnestly.

"I am the daughter of a Venetian peasant."

"And your name," queried Ginevra Montaldi.

"Veronica Fiasella. Ah! it was an ill-omened hour when I first chanced to meet Alessandro Sanvitale."



"Tell me your story—all—!" exclaimed the comtessa; and the girl proceeded to recount the circumstances, which had been previously narrated to her kinswoman, detailing the various particulars of their first meeting, his subsequent homage, his solemn vows, his emphatic assurances when she had sometimes declared a poor peasant no match for a rich young noble, and his protestations of undying constancy at their parting just before he set out for Naples.

"Lady," she resumed, "I was in the cathedral on Easter morning, and knelt by a shrine not far from you; he saw me, I have no doubt, but I did not wish to have any conversation with him then; and when the rites were over, stole cautiously away with my aunt. I followed you to the Villa Reale, and was concealed near the little temple where you stopped, and sat down on one of the low seats hard by. As I heard Sanvitale's avowal, a mist came before my eyes, and I sank down senseless."

"Poor girl," murmured the Comtessa Ginevra; "it is indeed bitter to believe that one, whom we have loved and trusted so entirely, has proved false!"

And the speaker's heart thrilled painfully at the remembrance of what she, too, had suffered, when the unwelcome thought that Raffaele Rossetti loved another, forced itself upon her, beclouding her sky with gloom. She also recalled the rustling of the shrubbery which clustered against the white temple walls, when Veronica Fiasella had fallen fainting to the earth, her companion's slight confusion, and the fact that he had immediately drawn her away from the spot.

"And now you know all," continued the girl.

"Yes, yes," replied the lady; "but it costs me no pang, save as I sympathise in your trials—your wrongs."

As she spoke Ginevra Montaldi moved forward, and gazed at the flower-girl of Venice—the clear, olive complexion flushed on cheek and lip with the hue of a ripe peach; the dark, brilliant eyes, and the long, ebony curls floating about her face and over her shoulders in shining masses.

"You are very, very beautiful," exclaimed the lady; "it is passing strange that beauty-loving Venetians should crush your hopes and dreams, that he might win me."

"Oh, no, no!" rejoined Veronica, "since I have seen you, I do not wonder they call you the star of Naples, or that you are so surrounded with admirers; but now I must not detain you longer. I leave the matter in your hands, and you can take what course you may think proper."

"I shall give the subject a few days, or a week's reflection," said the comtessa. "At this hour, however, it seems to me best to improve some favourable opportunity of informing your *quondam* lover of your visit to me, and counsel him to return to his allegiance to you. Though I have been much in his society, I am still at a loss to know how he would receive my statements or my advice, and I therefore must reflect ere I decide what action to take. Be assured, I should be most happy could I be instrumental in lifting the burden from your heavy heart."

"Thank you," exclaimed the flower-girl, and as they parted, the comtessa warmly clasped Veronica's hand, and pressed a kiss upon her brow.

The next day when the Villa Reale were thronged with the beauty, rank, and fashion of Naples, Veronica Fiasella came flitting from avenue to avenue, bearing a basket of flowers balanced on her graceful head. She had never before appeared as such a character in that resort, and all eyes followed the charming stranger.

None of the Montaldi family chanced to be in the grounds that day, having gone on an excursion to the Grotto of Paesolippo, with the friends sojourning with them, and when Sanvitale perceived Veronica, he felt inexpressibly relieved that the comtessa was not present.

"See, see that beautiful flower-girl," exclaimed a gentleman standing near the young Venetian noble. "Yes, yes," rejoined a companion; "if I except the bewildering Comtessa Ginevra, the Star of Naples, she is the most beautiful girl in all Italy—who is she?"

"Nobody knows even her name; some say she made her first appearance here in the cathedral on the morning of Easter Sunday, kneeling before a shrine, with a Spanish mantilla drawn over her head and about her face, almost like a disguise."

Sanvitale waited to hear no more, but leaving the group, followed the flower-girl along a broad avenue, till he reached a more secluded portion of the Villa Reale; then he clasped her arm, and said:

"What brings you here, Veronica?"

The girl turned, and lifting her eyes to his face, exclaimed:

"Can you ask that, Alessandro Sanvitale—you, who, of all persons in the world, should understand what has led me to Naples."

"Sit down," rejoined the young man, "and let me talk to you a few moments."

Veronica obeyed, and then said:

"Perhaps I had better first answer your question. There was a time when you professed to love me better than anything in the wide world, and perhaps you may remember our parting hour just before you left Venice. Was it strange that when week after week, and month after month passed, and I watched in vain for your return—when, too, painful rumours of your devotion to another reached me, I resolved to follow you and learn the truth?"

She paused in her rapid speech, and rising, began to pace to and fro along the avenue.

"Alessandro," she continued, "I see my folly now, for I could not believe you false, until I could have the evidence of my own senses. I was in the cathedral on Easter morning; I have watched and listened in this Villa Reale, crouching so near you and the comtessa at one time, that I might have touched her rich dress, had it not been for the fear of discovery."

The Venetian's cheek reddened with vexation, and his brow knit.

What was to be done? A thousand confused thoughts came floating through his brain, and as he recalled the past, he said, mentally:

"Though I could not win Ginevra Montaldi's heart, Veronica loves me abidingly."

He was here interrupted by the voice of Veronica, and her dark, accusing eyes were fixed upon him, as she exclaimed:

"I suppose I must bring myself to the belief that you never loved me—that all your professions were false."

"No, no," rejoined the young man, "you must not do me such injustice. I loved you, Veronica, till I came to Naples, and then my heart bowed to her; as you are aware, human nature is changeable?"

The young girl made no answer, but walked rapidly from the spot.

"Stay—stay!" exclaimed Sanvitale.

The girl paused an instant, and glanced back.

"Veronica," he said, "tell me where you are staying, for I should like another interview."

"No," replied the girl, "that would only cost me useless pain. Adieu!"

And she glided onward, almost with the speed of the wind.

#### CHAPTER XIV.

TIME rolled on, and the palace, on which the Comte di Montaldi had lavished so much wealth, was completed. For weeks extensive preparations had been going forward for a brilliant *festa* there on his daughter's eighteenth birthday, and the old palazzo and the new were as busy as beehives. Numerous invitations had been sent to the nobility of Naples and adjacent cities—to men of letters, artists, and sculptors, and among these had been included Raffaele Rossetti, and his friend, Masconi.

The festival day at length came, and the morning dawned gloriously on the fair city of Naples and its beautiful environs. There, on a noble hill, commanding an extensive prospect, and overlooking the delightful bay, stood that vast marble palace, with its white, sculptured walls, its graceful balconies, and its seven towers, shooting up towards the blue Italian sky; white, broad flights of steps, gleaming out from the deep green turf, wound to the base of the slope. The gateway was superb, and above the arch might be seen the arms of Di Montaldi, and on either side stood bronze knights in armour, recalling those days when the gallant crusaders fought and died with such heroism. At the appointed hour, carriage after carriage might have been seen rolling along the avenue leading to the palazzo, and depositing their freight at the massive door, flanked by exquisite statues, while daintily-shodden feet trod the mosaic floor. The lofty walls of the broad vestibule were covered with elaborate frescoes, and lined with graceful urns and rare sculpture, and the wide staircase was rich in skilful carving.

The palazzo itself was a marvel of architectural beauty, and everything that rare taste could suggest, or immense wealth purchase, had been lavished on this grand structure, its decorations, and surroundings. The windows were gorgeous with stained glass, and draped with velvet, brocades, and cloud-like lace; doors of costly wood swinging between marble caryatides; and each apartment, from the spacious room to the cosy little saloon, had its own peculiar charm. The long and lofty drawing-room dazzled the eye with its magnificence; rich curtains of peach-blossom velvet swept from cornice to floor, and the chairs, sofas, couches, and tabourets were cushioned with the same delicate material; tall vases of pure rock crystal, silver, malachite—nay, even of gold, glittered in the sunshine; costly tables stood here and there, supporting relics from the

neighbouring cities, Pompeii and Herculaneum, once buried by a fiery deluge from threatening Vesuvius; exquisite *bijouterie* from the East, gathered during a summer's tour in the bazaars of Constantinople; mimic mosques with their slender minarets, dainty caskets, and graceful trifles, enriched with lapis lazuli and mother-of-pearl; tall mirrors, with elaborate frames, reflected all this splendour. From stuccoed wreaths above depended glittering chandeliers, and lamps of bronze, silver and alabaster stood on the exquisite *dagere* brought from Paris to grace Raolfo di Montaldi's palace home; while busts, pictures, and statuary lent their charm to the scene. Beyond the stately parlours might be seen a superb music room, draped with amber hangings, and supplied with a superb grand piano, a costly harp, guitars inlaid with pearl and silver, and the lute, Ginevra's favourite instrument, which she had that day swept with rare skill. The banquetting hall had been fitted up with extreme taste and splendour; voluminous curtains of green damask swept over the windows; richly carved chairs, tables, and sideboards, glittering plate, costly *Sèvres*, and delicate glass, with statues of Flora, Hebe, and Diana completed the adornments of the room. Then there were the stately library, the luxurious boudoir, and the spacious guest chambers, with their draperies of satin and lace, their canopied couches, and their gorgeous carpets.

The birthday *festa* was to be a *fête champêtre*, and after strolling through the sumptuous palazzo, the guests were to spend the succeeding hours in the grounds, and dine in the open air. If the palace had seemed to realise the wonders of the "Arabia Nights," the grounds which surrounded it appeared like the work of enchantment; the fine garden, which had in days gone by belonged to a convent which had once owned that hill, had been enriched and beautified by its present owner, and was indeed a delightful haunt. There rose the stately palm, with its broad boughs; the orange tree, with its dark, glossy-green leaves, its sweet blossoms, and its rich golden fruit; there waved the peach, the almond, the lime, and the lemon, the grey olive, the fig, and the apricot; luxuriant vines trailed along the walls, with their heavy clusters; while in that part of the garden devoted to flowers, avenues bordered with blossoming hedges, stretched away before you in delightful vistas; rose thickets filled the air with their fragrance; the jasmine, the myrtle, the cistus, the gorgeous gladioli, and brilliant flowers transplanted from tropic lands to bloom and brighten beneath Italian skies, while bright birds soared from ilex to oleander, and from oleander to laurel; and graceful gazelles bounded with light feet along the broad paths, or paused to drink by some clear pool, dimpling in the sunlight.

The grounds beyond this garden were lovely indeed; the turf was green as emerald, and soft as velvet, and looked tempting enough to woo the light feet of fairy revellers; here and there might be seen clumps of grand old trees, casting broad, cool shadows, in which deer lay crouched in graceful attitudes; numerous fountains, flung their *jets d'eau* far upward, and fell into sculptured basins, where swans glided to and fro, and the scarlet Egyptian ibis came rustling through the tall reeds and aquatic plants, his gorgeous plumage glowing out like some vivid flame. Now and then the eye caught a glimpse of tall pagodas, gay pavilions, and white tents, while urns and statuary were scattered about in tasteful profusion.

Within the palace, all was festal stir and excitement. Near the door of the grand drawing-room stood the Comte di Montaldi and his daughter, receiving the congratulations of their friends, and in close proximity to them might be seen Beatrice d'Este, the host's fair ward. The Comtessa Ginevra had never looked more beautiful than on her eighteenth birthday, and her rich and elegant costume set off her matchless loveliness to advantage. She wore a robe of costly lace, looped up with pearl *aigrettes*, and revealing a skirt and train of a delicate violet coloured satin; deep falls of point lace drooped from the alabaster neck, and shaded the exquisitely-rounded arms; her shining black hair was gathered in a mass of rich curls at the back of her head, and her white brow was spanned with the Montaldi coronet, while her neck and arms were encircled with rare jewels.

Beatrice d'Este looked lovely indeed, in a costume which accorded well with her Peri-like beauty—a robe of rare Indian muslin, elaborately embroidered by some pale nun, and worn over blue silk, with pearls gleaming in her fair hair, and coiled about her arms and neck. The drawing-room was soon crowded with guests, and among them might be seen the three nobles, Visconti, Castinelli, and Alessandro Sanvitale, and all watched the comtessa with deep interest, and had offered their earnest congratulations; but the young girl's heart yearned for one presence—Raffaele Rossetti had not yet arrived. Suddenly there was a rustling of rich vestments

near the threshold, and the porter announced Don Fernando and Donna Sybilla de Valdee, and now every eye turned to the lady, who glided with royal grace into the drawing-room, leaning on her uncle's arm, and approached the host and hostess.

Ginevra Montaldi and Donna Sybilla had exchanged several calls, and now an adjacent palazzo had been purchased by Don Fernando and his niece, and was being enlarged and fitted up in such a manner that it bid fair to rival the Palace with Seven Towers.

"One cannot wonder at the sensation Donna Sybilla creates," said the comte to himself, "she is a magnificent woman."

And her appearance on that festal day justified Montaldi's reflections.

The lady's costume was, as usual, tasteful and luxurious in the extreme; and she now wore a black lace over-dress, a train of garnet-coloured moiré, a heavy cluster of drooping, blood-red blossoms, relieved by dark green leaves, fastened to her bodice by a fanciful diamond brooch, and a heavier spray of the same flowers drawn through her satin sash; a tiara, with a star of brilliants in the centre, glittered above her forehead; her necklace and bracelets, and even the fan she carried, and seemed to wield with Spanish grace, were all ablaze with jewels. In the sweetest of voices she greeted the comte and his daughter, offered her congratulations, and then passed on amid the guests with all her wonted dignity.

The comte's eyes followed her an instant, for the sight of her seemed to recall some youthful memory, and then on second thought, he said, mentally:

"No, no, it cannot be that I ever saw this brilliant Donna Sybilla till she took up her abode in Naples."

The comte now transferred his attention to his daughter, and his duties as host. The next moment he saw the crimson deepen on her cheeks, and turning, perceived the cause of her confusion; in the vestibule stood Mazzoni, Raffaele Rossetti, and his two sisters. The porter announced their names, and the artist was the first to advance, with Aurora and Constanca, while Mazzoni followed. The young man clasped her extended hand, and murmured:

"Lady, allow me to offer my sincerest wishes for my pupil's welfare—may heaven's choicest blessings follow you, and your life be long and happy!"

"Thank you," replied the lady, and turned to give a warm welcome to his sisters.

How delicate and refined they looked in their white festal robes, and with their flower-crowned heads. As the young comtessa gazed she felt a thrill of fond pride in Rossetti and those who had been his care so long. At that hour she contrasted him with the three nobles then gathered there, and felt how immeasurably they lost by the comparison.

The reception over, the guests took their way into the grounds, where a sumptuous banquet was to be provided in the open air.

(To be continued.)

## THE PROPHECY.

BY THE

Author of "Oliver Darvel," "Michel-dever," &c., &c.

### CHAPTER XVIII.

THE woman hastened on her errand, and after a struggle with the half-slumbering child, Mrs. Ashford succeeded in removing the shawl from her head. By that time Lethe had returned with the ice and some towels. Cold applications were renewed, and her mother regretted that she had not continued them so long as a vestige of danger remained. Yet she could not help believing that the anger of Fantasia with her father had caused a sudden rush of blood to her brain, while it was still too weak to bear such excitement, and brought on this relapse. She nerved herself as well as she could to bear the explosion of anger with which she knew this news would be met by Ashford, who said:

"If my child dies, I shall consider you as much a murderer as if you had struck a knife to her heart. What business had you to drag her home this hot morning? After allowing her to be half killed, it was as little as those people could do to afford her shelter till she was entirely out of danger."

"It was not their fault that I came away, Mr. Ashford. I should have been welcome to stay a week, or a month, if I had been willing to do so. I thought you would be looking for me, and Fanny seemed quite restored this morning. I believe it was the struggle with you at the gate which has caused all this mischief. You will soon have the freedom you have so often coveted—very soon, if this illness proves fatal to my child: let that thought keep you within decent bounds while she lies before you struggling for life."

"It is a lie that I injured her by making her angry. I brought her in the house at once, and I

told you then that she should not have been removed from Melrose till she was quite well," he said, and raised his hand menacingly, but something in her pale set face caused him to recoil, and he hoarsely added: "If I lose that child, it will be as bad a day for you as for me when she is taken away. See that every care is taken of her. I have ordered my horse, and I shall go myself for the doctor."

Before Dr. Cameron arrived, though he came more speedily than Mrs. Ashford had dared to hope, she was burning with fever and moving restlessly upon her pillow.

The little man came quickly to the side of the bed, and in some dismay, said:

"Dear me! dear me! what can have caused such an attack as this? Last evening Fanny was doing as well as possible, and I had no idea she would require another visit from me. What has happened to throw her into this condition? She must have been violently excited, Mrs. Ashford; and I thought you understood, of course, that the child was to be amused and kept quiet for a few days."

"I guarded her in every way I could," she replied in a low tone, glancing at the same time at her husband. He hastened to say:

"It was the drive from Melrose in the hot sun that has brought Fanny to this pass. I was astonished to learn from Mrs. Ashford that you had sanctioned her removal."

The physician flashed an indignant glance upon the speaker, and said:

"I understand my professional duties, Mr. Ashford, and I can judge the condition of a patient with accuracy. The road from Melrose is well shaded, and the drive would have benefited your daughter in place of injuring her, if she had been properly cared for after she reached her own home."

Dr. Cameron looked sternly at Ashford, and he felt himself in some way compelled to answer him. He sullenly said:

"The child is a little vixen, and she got in a fury with me because I snatched off her bonnet, and exposed her bald head. I brought her into the house, and her mother did what she could to soothe her again. Now you are here, you must stay with her till all danger is past, doctor, for I would not lose her for a great deal."

"You talk, sir, as if your interests, more than your affections, are at stake in the recovery of your child," said the physician, with an accent of contempt he took little pains to disguise. "Your wife is not strong enough to bear the burden of nursing her, for she needs attention herself. A woman must be found to look after the child."

Mrs. Ashford here eagerly spoke:

"I could not trust her to a stranger, doctor. I am strong enough to watch beside my darling, and I can do all that is necessary for her."

"My dear lady, I have no doubt you think so, but I am the best judge of what you are able to do. Mrs. Melrose has an experienced nurse, and I will go by there and ask her to send her over."

It was thus settled, in spite of such feeble objections as Mrs. Ashford could offer. Her husband said nothing, for he cared very little to whom they were indebted for assistance, provided he was spared the expense of a professional nurse.

Dr. Cameron wrote his prescription, gave his directions, and promising to return in the evening and pass the night with his patient, he rode away in the direction of Melrose, bearing with him a message from Mr. Ashford to the effect that if Violet could be retained till Fantasia was out of danger, both himself and his wife would be very much obliged to Mrs. Melrose for keeping her.

Mrs. Melrose went to the Vale next day to make enquiries respecting Fanny. Meeting Ashford at the gate, she said:

"Poor Harry was in despair when he heard that Fanny was so ill. Let us hope, Mr. Ashford, for the speedy recovery of your daughter. Fanny is very ill, but she has a vigorous constitution, and I think she will be restored to you. Her mother was guilty of no intentional neglect, I assure you; so do not lay on her the additional burden of your displeasure. She has enough to bear without that."

"If the child is taken from us, her loss will be nothing to mine—nothing!" he passionately exclaimed, and rushed from the room, unable longer to sustain with outward calmness the angry and rebellious feelings that swelled in his heart.

"Poor man! he feels this affliction more deeply than I believed he could," thought Mrs. Melrose, as she arose to take leave. She soothed the pale mother with such words of hope and comfort as she could command, and with offers of such assistance as she could render, bade her adieu for the present.

Dr. Cameron spent the night at the Vale, and almost compelled Mrs. Ashford to seek some repose, leaving the patient to his care. The following morning brought Mrs. Whitney, who remained the greater

portion of the day; but in the evening she had to return to her little family, though Fantasia seemed steadily sinking into the grave that was yawning to receive her.

Days of watching, of tender care and unceasing prayer, passed over Mrs. Ashford's head; each hour seemed an age of torture to her; and how she passed through this ordeal without dying beneath the constant strain upon her shattered system, she did not know; strength was given her, and she sustained herself till the crisis was passed.

While Fantasia lay fluctuating between life and death, the following communication came to Ashford from Claude Benton:

"GREENVILLE, SEPT. 10th, 18—

"ASHFORD.—I have heard that your daughter is ill unto death; if her illness proves fatal, our compact is of course at an end. You may think me a very hard creditor, but the devil is not so black as he is painted. If this great sorrow comes to your wife, have compassion on her, and cherish her as you promised when you married her. It will be to your interest to do so, for as long as she lives, I shall not exact from you the money you owe me. In the event of her death you need not hope to evade me, for I shall have a watch kept on you, and you will be brought to bay (or to pay) in short order. O.B."

Ashford read this communication with curling lips, and bent brows. He almost hated his wife, and the thought that safety for himself was only to be won through kindness to her, was wormwood to him. With Fantasia to train and mould to suit his own purposes, two more years in the Vale might be borne; but without her—with only a broken-hearted woman as his companion there, he felt as if the worst that could happen to him would be preferable to such a fate. He watched more anxiously than ever beside the sick-bed and the flat of the physician that gave back life to the wasted sufferer, was scarcely more welcome to her mother than to himself.

Fantasia's convalescence was tedious and protracted, and her father left her chiefly to the tender ministrations of the pale woman who devoted every hour of her time to her amusement. She soothed the irritable and capricious child, ministered to her sick fancies, and used all the arts her great love taught her, to bring back health and bloom to her faded blossom.

As the invalid regained strength and flesh, a new fear assailed Ashford. Never since the delirium left her, had Fantasia uttered a line of poetry, or seemed to remember that she had once delighted in declaiming and showing off her little acquisitions. The sight of a book seemed an annoyance to her, and she declared she neither knew, nor cared to know anything that was in them.

Ashford tempted her in every way to resume her former habits, but with him she was sullenly impracticable. Her mind had evidently received a great shock, and after many experiments, it was discovered that she had forgotten all she had been taught. She did not even recognise the letters of the alphabet, and the memory, once almost supernaturally tenacious, seemed now a blank.

This conviction came home to him with a great shock, but he comforted himself with the hope that, as perfect health returned, the dulled mind would react, and her old ambition return to spur her on in the career it was now so vital to him that she should embrace.

It was most important to him that this change in Fantasia should not become known to Benton, and he replied to his brief letter in one even more curt.

"VALE, October 15, 18—

"All is right—the child is herself again. She was very ill, but she is going about again, and regaining her flesh and good looks very rapidly. I shall perform my part of the compact, so have no fears. Mrs. Ashford would thank you, no doubt, if she knew how thoughtful you were in her behalf, but I have not told her. As to the debt, it will be you who will be called on to pay, old fellow. H. A."

For a season, Mrs. Ashford feared that her own words had come home to her, and her child would be an idiot, but that crowning sorrow was spared her. Fantasia had only lost the divine spark of genius which had illumined her infant mind, but her capacity to understand, to love, was untouched. She was less wayward and more affectionate than before, and her mother could not find it in her heart to grieve over the loss of her dangerous gifts. That which filled her husband with chagrin and rage, was to her a comfort and a blessing.

### CHAPTER XIX.

RELIEVED from her oppressive fears on Fantasia's account, Mrs. Ashford seemed to take a new lease of life. Dr. Cameron's skill in some measure relieved the spasms of the heart from which she suffered, and she began to indulge the hope that she



might live to see her daughter grown up and happily settled in life.

Change and amusement were declared necessary for the child, and in his anxiety concerning her, Ashford conceded to the wishes of his wife, and they went together to S—, the place in which she had formerly resided, and made a long visit to friends of Mrs. Ashford who had often urged her to spend a winter with them.

Violet was left with Mrs. Melrose, to whom she had become warmly attached, and she and Harry were the best of friends.

Ashford made such financial arrangements as might be important to him in the future. To release himself from Claude Benton's claim was his most pressing need, for he had almost given up all hope of a change in Fantasia. Her health was perfectly re-established, but she was now as commonplace as any other child of her years, with few gleams of her former vivacity brightening her dulled mind.

In his heart Ashford cursed her as incapable of being of further use to himself, and therefore valueless to him. Before he left home, he had won from Mrs. Ashford a relinquishment of her dower in the farm, as the price of his consent to the visit she wished to make to her old friends.

It was a heavy sacrifice to make for the purchase of a few months of peace among those who loved and appreciated her; but Mrs. Ashford knew that her consent to give up her interest in the place would be extorted from her if it was not voluntarily given, and she demanded in return that the change Dr. Cameron thought so necessary for Fanny should be the reward of her compliance with his will.

Ashford endeavoured to delude his wife with the assurance that a larger and more improved place had been selected by him, which he was endeavouring to make arrangements to purchase. He promised her a less secluded home and a more liberal style of living in the future, and talked largely of the improved condition of his finances. His wife listened with a sigh, and tried to hope for the best; but she had lost all faith in him.

Ashford sold the Vale to his partner, with the condition that he was to remain upon it as his tenant till the expiration of the two years agreed on between Claude Benton and himself as the time for the surrender of Fantasia to the former; and Ashford thought it would go hard with himself if he did not succeed in outwitting his former friend in the end, if the child proved utterly unavailing as a means of cancelling his debt.

Having thus completed his arrangements, Ashford informed his wife that the place he had selected as their future home had been sold at a higher price than he could afford, and he had determined not to part from the Vale for a few more years. She did not question the truth of his statements, and she was better pleased to remain among the friends she knew, than to be taken to live in a strange neighbourhood.

Mrs. Ashford had spent three pleasant months with Captain Gordon's family, and her health and spirits had improved greatly. There was no apparent change in Fantasia, except that gleams of her old waywardness showed themselves, and her father thought that a return to scenes so long familiar to her might strike the electric cord of memory, and restore her to her former self.

During these winter months, Fantasia had been induced to share the studies of the young Gordons, and she had made some progress towards learning to read again; but she showed no interest in her books, and would often, for days, refuse to open one. Her mother thought it best to indulge her whims, and she was allowed to use her own pleasure with reference to her lessons. Mrs. Ashford not only thought this the most judicious course to pursue, but there was an undefined dread in her own heart that, at some stage of Fantasia's progress, old ideas might be aroused, old fancies brought into play, and in place of her loving and gentle child, she might again see the precocious genius starting, like a phoenix, from the dead ashes of forgotten memories. The child's long illness had paralysed portions of her active brain; but who could tell at what moment, or under what circumstances, the electric cord with which they were darkly bound would thrill to a re-awakening touch? But for this fear, Mrs. Ashford would at this time have been happier than she had been since the first months of her ill-starred marriage. For her sake, her husband was received beneath their roof with kindness and courtesy, though, as we have said, he did not test their hospitality too severely. He was absent the greater portion of the winter attending to his own affairs, and only came back in March to remove his wife and daughter.

To the surprise of Mrs. Ashford, she was told to prepare for a brief visit to London, after which they would return to the Vale. Her husband, with great show of cordiality, invited Captain Gordon and his

wife to come to them in August, bringing their children for a summer vacation, and a half-promise was given that they would do so.

They parted from Mrs. Ashford with many assurances of tender affection, and saw her leave their house with a feeling of regret they could scarcely have explained to themselves. It arose doubtless from the intuitive conviction that on earth they would behold her no more.

When the travellers reached London, Ashford went to an obscure hotel, in which he installed his wife and child, and then condescended to explain to the former that he had come hither to consult a physician, who was celebrated for his skill in diseases of the brain. He wished to have his opinion as to the actual condition of Fantasia, and on the following morning he designed taking her to his consulting rooms, to ascertain if anything could be done for her.

His wife burst into tears, and pitifully said:

"If you will only have patience, all will be right with Fanny. Don't allow any experiments to be tried upon her. I entreat that nature may be allowed to restore her in its own good time. She is not dull; she has as much cleverness as is good for a child of her tender years. Precocious children rarely develop into anything wonderful, and the check her faculties have received may be of ultimate advantage to her."

"You argue like an idiot, Mrs. Ashford," was the rude reply. "To keep your child for yourself, to hold her back from the brilliant destiny I had planned for her, you are even capable of denying her the assistance a skilful physician can afford her. Which is her true friend? The parent who is anxious to see her faculties restored to their original brightness, or the one who wishes to keep them dim to serve her own purpose? I brought Fantasia here for advice, and it is my purpose to restore her, if possible, to what she was before your carelessness brought on her the calamity from which she is suffering. I think it as little as you can do to acquiesce in my wishes, without making a scene about it."

Fantasia was standing beside a window looking out on the street below, but the sound of her father's raised voice caused her to turn and wistfully regard him.

She came slowly towards her father, and softly said:

"Don't mind mother's crying, and don't be cross to her. I want something done for me, for I'm not right somehow. I—I begin to think of things, and then they all go away from me."

Ashford took the child upon his knee, and caressing her with unusual gentleness, said:

"I won't puzzle your brains now, *pétite*, but you will soon be able to understand and remember all that you once knew. I will take you to see a nice old gentleman to-morrow, who will understand your case, and give you a life elixir to bring back strength to your poor little mind."

Mrs. Ashford said nothing more, but she slept little that night, and in the morning prepared Fantasia, with an aching heart, for the proposed visit. She wished to accompany her, but her husband decidedly negatived the proposal to do so, declaring that she looked too ill to leave the house.

Through the window the poor woman saw these two walk away, and after shedding a few bitter tears, she took the drops Dr. Cameron had given her to use in any crisis of emotion, and then laid down on the sofa to try and compose herself.

"It is the beginning of the end," she sadly murmured. "Just as I thought she would be all my own, she begins to show glimpses of her former cleverness. Oh, heavenly Father! do not judge me too hardly for wishing to keep my darling simple and pure, even at the cost of her immortal mind. As she is, she is clever enough for me; now he will take her from me—he will make her what I shudder to think of!"

While the helpless mother wept and prayed, Ashford walked briskly through the streets with his young companion, making, for him, unwonted efforts to interest her in what was passing before her.

It was yet very early, and when they reached Dr. Blomberg's Ashford was glad to find that no other patients had yet arrived. After waiting a few moments in the outer room, the father and daughter were admitted into the *sanctum* of the learned physician. They found there a gray-haired man of sixty, with the fresh complexion and clear blue eyes of youth. His broad brow was scarcely lined by the years that had passed over him, though his long white beard gave him the appearance of a patriarch.

Dr. Blomberg scanned the two who approached him with observant eyes, and his lips relaxed into a smile as he held out his hand to Fanny, and in good English, spoken with a strong German accent, said:

"Good-morning, sir, and little miss. Pray be seated, though I think neither of you can have come to me to use my skill on your behalf."

Fantasia passed her disengaged hand over the waves of silver hair that lay upon his breast, and with the confidence of childhood, said:

"I am ill; I've come to you to cure me. I hope you can do it."

The physician looked at her father, and he nodded confirmation of her words. An expression of tender compassion came into the eyes of the old man, and he drew her to himself, and looked into her face long and searchingly. He then said:

"I will do my best for you, you may be sure."

Ashford gave him an accurate account of her illness, and the effect of her fall, dilating at some length on the brilliant promise of genius which seemed to have been nipped in the bud by that unfortunate accident.

The physician listened with grave attention, and after reflecting a few moments, said:

"I have made diseases of the nerves and brain my speciality, and I think I understand them as well as any man living. I see nothing in the appearance of this child that indicates disease, except a trifling dilation of the pupils of the eyes. That is gradually lessening, and with patience and care, she will slowly return to her former condition. At fifteen years of age she will be as bright as if this temporary cloud had not fallen on her."

"Six years to wait? My dear sir, that is almost as bad as if you said she would never recover."

Dr. Blomberg regarded the speaker with surprise; he coldly said:

"It will be safe to leave the child to the universal mother. Her cure will work itself out without the aid of medicine."

"It is most important to me that she shall return as soon as possible to what she was before this accident dashed all my hopes, by making her what she is at present."

"May I ask of what nature were those hopes?"

"You may, and there is no reason why I should not answer you frankly. My daughter is designed for the stage, and before this misfortune, she showed such talent for the calling, that she would have become famous as soon as she appeared. She was a prodigy of talent, and I had made a lucrative engagement for her with a manager who accidentally saw her in one of her amateur performances. But that accident had destroyed both memory and taste for what had once so deeply charmed her, and I brought her to you in the hope that you could do something to revivify them."

"I am willing to do what I can for her, for the child interests me. Time, as I said before, will be your best ally; but I will prepare some medicines which may assist the reaction that has already commenced. Has your daughter ever been taken back to the place where the accident occurred? If she has not, the sight of it, under circumstances as nearly similar as possible, might, by a sudden shock, restore life to that portion of her brain which has evidently been paralysed."

"I have never allowed her to visit Melrose since her illness. Your suggestion seems to me a good one, and I will act on it as soon as possible. I beg that you will put up such remedies as she will need, and give me explicit directions as to their application."

"I will do so; but I must examine the child's head. The skull may have been slightly injured, without the fact being detected by a less skilful manipulator than myself."

Dr. Blomberg regarded the child compassionately.

"Poor little dear," he said. "Since you came to me for advice concerning the mental condition of your daughter, sir, the best I can give you is, that such exciting studies as she seems to have pursued before her illness, had better be avoided for several years to come. Even if her taste for the drama should revive, it will not be well to encourage it while she is still so very young. You cannot have thought of putting her on the stage while she is such a mere child? Ten drops of this, mixed with water, and taken once every day, will slowly act upon the brain. I will also give you a supply of pills to be used at intervals. But I will write the directions fully, that you may not depart from them in any particular. Now tell me your name, my dear, for I shall remember you, and I should like to know at a future day if I have been able to benefit you."

Before the child could reply, her father said:

"Her name is Fantasia Ashford. I will write to you and let you know if she has not benefited by your prescription."

Fantasia walked beside him as one in a dream, as they made their way back to the obscure street in which the hotel was situated in which they had taken lodgings.

When the father and daughter entered the shabbily furnished room in which they had left Mrs. Ashford, they found her sleeping uneasily, but she started up when the door opened, and nervously said:

"You have been gone very long. I hope Fauty is not tired of walking so far."

"He says that there is not much the matter with her, and, with proper care, she will soon be restored to her former self. As you have never been in London before, Laura, I will get a carriage and drive with you and Fauty through the principal streets."

Mrs. Ashford knew that remonstrance would be useless, and she said nothing in reply.

They drove through innumerable streets, saw the outside of the houses, and at six o'clock set out on their night journey. Ashford left his wife and daughter at Mr. Whitney's and went on to the Vale to make arrangements for sending in for them in the morning.

The welcome extended to the travellers was very cordial, and the evening was passed by Mrs. Whitney in listening to all her friend had to relate of the associates of her youth in S—.

In return, she told of Violet, and what a pet she had become, both with Mrs. Melrose and her son. She also told that a cheque for money had been sent from London for Mr. Ashford, under cover to her husband; so the child was not forgotten, if given up to strangers for a season.

(To be continued.)

## UNDER THE STARS.

BLANDELIA ELLERY was certainly the prettiest girl in the village, and Martin Harewood the smartest and handsomest lad. It was impossible for Martin to avoid loving Blandelia. They had been playmates from infancy, and had grown up with the mutual understanding that they were to be man and wife when years and opportunity would permit.

The worst enemy he had, however, was Blandelia's own brother Luke—a quarrelsome, selfish boy, who was continually abusing his sister. She was too amiable to complain of his ill treatment, until one day Martin surprised him abusing her. The lover expostulated, and the brother was violent and insulting. Words speedily led to blows, and Luke Ellery received the thrashing he so richly deserved. This unexpected reverse was most galling to him. He never forgave Martin Harewood for it, and secretly did all he could to injure him, though openly he did not dare to show his black and bitter hatred.

The most dangerous rival that Martin had was Francis Morrison, the son of a wealthy merchant and ship-owner, Rual Morrison. Francis Morrison lost no opportunity of paying his court to the pretty Blandelia. Luke Ellery was Francis' firm friend, and did all he could to favour his suit with his sister. Rumour had it that they had been associated in several wild adventures together, and Francis had the reputation of being a reckless and dissipated young man.

Walking home under the stars, Martin Harewood thought of all these things, and dreaded to ship for a long voyage, fearing lest his rich rival might win his sweetheart during his absence. And yet why should he seek to bind her to his hapless destiny? What had he before him in life but one long, endless struggle with poverty?

A cry breaking the stillness of the night, quickly followed by a sharp, ringing pistol shot, scattered his gloomy thoughts and brought him to himself. Some foul deed, murder perhaps, was doing on that lonely road. Heedless of personal risk, and all unarmed as he was, he bounded forward to the assistance of him who had so loudly called for aid. Directed by the sound of groans, he found a man lying under a tree by the roadside. He raised his head from the ground, and the starlight gleamed full upon his features. To his surprise, he recognised the wounded man as James Payson, a reckless, spendthrift sailor belonging to the village, seldom at home, but notorious for his lawless conduct during the little time he passed on land between his long voyages. He was writhing in great pain, and a crimson stain on the white bosom of his shirt showed ghastly in the pale light of the twinkling stars.

"Who has done this?" demanded Martin, in consternation.

The wounded man opened his eyes feebly, and recognised Martin with a kind of fierce joy.

"Good lad," he muttered, faintly, "have him hanged for this, won't you? A cowardly lubber! I won his money fairly—he would have robbed me, but I was too strong for him; but he was armed, and shot me—the villain!"

He sank back completely exhausted. The bullet had done its work effectually—life was ebbing fast.

"Who was it?" asked Martin, breathlessly.

The wounded sailor's lips moved convulsively, but no sound came from them. The thought that he was about to die with the murderer's name unspoken seemed to torture the dying man more than the pangs of dissolution. He grasped Martin forcibly, and drawing his ear down to his lips, gasped out a name, and sank back like a log. But Martin was heedless

whether he lived or was death-stricken; that name had frozen the current of his blood and nearly turned him to stone. It was impossible that he, of all men, could take any steps to bring the assassin to justice.

Whilst thus stunned, as it were, by this dread intelligence, he found himself surrounded by seven or eight sailors.

"He's the murderer—lay hold of him!"

"I heard the pistol shot!"

"Caught him in the very act!"

These exclamations, and others of a similar nature, fell upon Martin's ears as four sturdy arms grasped him with no gentle pressure.

"You are mistaken—I am not the murderer."

The matter was not ended by this assertion. The sailors had discovered a messmate in James Payson, and were bent on speedy vengeance. Martin's word alone could not prove his innocence. Circumstances were strongly against him, and, to his consternation, he found that the belief in his guilt was universal. Should he denounce the real murderer to clear himself? Would it not be deemed a paltry subterfuge? Besides, it appeared to him like the act of a craven.

Search was made for the weapon with which the deed had been committed; but no pistol could be found. In moving the supposed dead man, a faint groan escaped his lips. It was a welcome sound to Martin Harewood's ears—for, did breath remain sufficient for speech, his innocence would soon be made manifest. The sailor revived somewhat, but it was only the momentary consciousness that precedes death. His eyes closed, and he gazed wonderingly at the many faces by which he was surrounded.

"James Payson," cried Martin, with startling emphasis, "I am accused of your murder. Speak—did I do it?"

"No—no!" came faintly from the dying man's lips.

"Who then—who?" was the general interrogation.

"He knows."

The sailor pointed at Martin, a significant gesture that bade him remember that he was to be the avenger of this night's tragedy, sank back and expired. Martin Harewood's breast held the secret, known only to him, and that other one who was henceforth to bear the brand of Cain.

Many and eager were the demands to know the murderer's name, but Martin had resolved never to let that name pass his lips. It was not for him to usurp Heaven's high prerogative of vengeance—let its thunders strike the guilty man; he would leave him to the pangs of remorse his own conscience must inflict. He explained to the group the circumstances that had led him to the spot, and how he had found the wounded man, but declared his utter inability to disclose the murderer's name. Neither threats nor entreaties could elicit more from him.

They were not satisfied with his story. He was locked up for the night. In the morning he was brought before a magistrate, but no one appeared as accuser. It was merely said that he knew the murderer, if he would only tell. He declared he could not tell—a prevarication, perhaps; but then what certainty had he that James Payson had spoken the truth? It answered the purpose. He was discharged; but a kind of disgrace seemed to have fallen upon him. His acquittal was like the Scotch verdict of "Not proven"—everybody had a suspicion of his guilt, though his innocence was clearly manifested by his not being held to the charge.

Martin Harewood had added another burden to the load that was grinding him to the dust. Men regarded him with suspicion, and in averted looks and cold words from those he had once esteemed his friends he plainly saw that he was deemed a man who had stained his hands in human blood; and more galling than all, the real murderer walked unblushingly amongst his neighbours, and took every occasion to utter covert sneers against the man who so generously shielded him. Driven almost to desperation, he went again to Queenstown and shipped on board a whaler which was to sail the next day. He returned home to make his preparations for the voyage, and to bid farewell to his aged mother, and to her whose image was so firmly stamped upon his heart.

He paused a moment as he reached the spot where that sad deed had been committed under the stars. Approaching footsteps caused him to look up, and he saw dark-browed Luke Ellery rapidly approaching. It was the first time he had encountered him for a week. Luke started uneasily as they came face to face; the calm regard of Martin Harewood seemed to annoy him greatly.

"You—you here?" he stammered, by no means pleased with the meeting.

"Yes," answered Martin, briefly.

"You got out of the scrape, didn't you?" pursued Luke, sneeringly, and shifting his eyes uneasily from the other's gaze.

"I did," returned Martin, calmly; "innocence is always safe."

"Innocence! Ha, ha!" laughed Luke Ellery, as if he rather doubted it.

"Yes," continued Martin, with grave earnestness.

"The dying man told me the murderer's name."

Luke Ellery started violently, and it was only by the strongest effort that he could affect composure again.

"It is easy to say so," he said, but his voice sounded quite husky, and he glanced around in a perturbed kind of manner. "Did he tell anybody else?" he added, in a hoarse whisper.

"No," answered Martin; "but I will tell it to you."

Luke Ellery trembled as though he had been seized with a sudden palsy.

"Indeed!" he cried, with a very lame attempt at a sneer. "What is it?"

"Luke Ellery," was the deliberate reply.

"It is false!" he shrieked.

"Hush!" responded Martin, solemnly. "You are standing on his blood."

Luke Ellery cowered like a whipped cur. It was easy to read his guilt in his trembling limbs, and in the abject look of fear upon his face.

"You will not betray me?" he whined. "Think of Blandelia!"

"I do," said Martin, sternly; "and for her sake I spare you. I would not have the blush of shame mantle her gentle forehead. I am more considerate of her feelings than you have been."

Luke Ellery mumbled something that sounded like thanks, and hurried away. He was filled with consternation at this discovery. He thought his secret safe, and had exulted to find suspicion had fallen upon Martin Harewood; and he had left no effort unspared, by covert allusions and innuendoes, to confirm and strengthen this suspicion; and now he was at the mercy of the man whom he had always hated, and that hatred gained intensity from the thought. Utterly unprincipled himself, he placed no dependence upon Martin's word. He must get out of the country as quickly as possible, escape before he was denounced. He saw a placard headed: "Wanted—Men." The whaler Golden Cross was to sail the next day, and had not yet completed her crew. Here was the very opportunity he wanted. He went to the shipping-office and put his name down on the book as John Jackson. He received his advance pay, and resolved to remain in strict seclusion until the ship sailed.

As Martin Harewood drew near Blandelia's cottage, he saw her in the garden, conversing with Francis Morrison. This sight confirmed the belief which had for some time been gathering in his mind, that she was about to desert him in his poverty and affliction, and accept his wealthy rival. Rage inflamed his heart; he dared not trust himself near them; so he drew back near the shadows of the little grove on the opposite side of the road. Had he known what was passing between them, he would have been spared an act of folly, and much consequent misery.

"I am at home now, Mr. Morrison," said Blandelia, for having met her on the road, he had insisted upon escorting her to her dwelling. "Leave me."

Francis Morrison was not disposed to retire without making another effort to win this rustic maid.

"Compare this home with the one I offer you," he urged.

"Compare the wild roses of my garden," she returned pleasantly, "to those blooming in your conservatory; the colours here are not less beautiful, though the fragrance be less powerful. Man's art has cultivated your flower—nature has planted mine; and though art may make the odour stronger, may it not to the sense of nature have a sickening perfume?"

"You are well educated, Blandelia," he remarked.

"Thanks to Martin Harewood," she responded, ingenuously.

"Curses on Martin Harewood! At one time I thought you were to be mine."

"True," answered Blandelia, blushing at the word; "and I gave you the right to think so. With the vanity of girlhood, I felt flattered by your praise. You are rich, I poor—still I loved Martin. I did wrong to meet you so often and listen to you—but while I listened I loved Martin. Farewell, sir; never till he is false, will I prove so."

These words angered Francis Morrison, and made him forget himself.

"Will you throw yourself away upon a beggar?" he cried scornfully.

She turned upon him fiercely:

"I would rather endure beggary with him," she answered, with flashing eyes; "I would rather tramp throughout the world barefoot, and in rage, secure of his love."

"This is all well enough in talk," expostulated Francis Morrison.

"I mean it," she cried, curtly, and turning away entered her cottage.

Francis Morrison passed up the road with the in-



ward determination to win this girl in spite of every obstacle. This rebuff did but increase his desire to possess her. Martin Harewood, maddened at the sight of this supposed rival, with lover-like inconsistency burst into the cottage and reproached Blandelia with coquetry. Her woman's pride would not suffer her to explain, and so they parted in anger. Not until he was gone did she learn that he had shipped for a long voyage; and then she bitterly reproached herself for not having made friends with him before he left.

The day the Golden Cross was to sail the captain was taken severely ill, and could not leave his home; in this emergency Francis Morrison assumed his place, at the request of his father, the ship belonging to him, and she sailed at the appointed time, the change making no difference to the crew.

To his great surprise, Martin Harewood discovered Luke Ellerby among the crew, and the astonishment of Luke was equally great.

"Curse him!" he muttered. "If I had only known this, I might have stayed on land. Now I am in as bad a fix as ever. And here's Frank Morrison come aboard as captain. I'm sure to be blown. A nice mess I have made of this affair."

Francis Morrison was equally surprised to find Martin Harewood and Luke Ellerby among his crew. This young man had one peculiarity which must be noticed in his favour. On shipboard he cast aside the irregularities that disfigured his character on land, and was strictly attentive to his duties, proving that he had energy and tact for the position he had assumed. The mates, who had sailed with him before, commented upon his strict attention to duty, and came to the conclusion that Francis Morrison had sown his wild oats and turned over a new leaf. He greeted Martin Harewood with a friendly smile, and told him he would endeavour to make the voyage as pleasant for him as possible; but Martin received his overtures quite coolly. It was not in his nature to be friendly with the man who, to the best of his belief, had supplanted him in the affections of the girl of his heart.

Luke Ellerby was summoned to the cabin for a private conference with the captain; he went in high glee; knowing the intimate terms on which they had associated on land, he thought he should be favoured and made quite comfortable on board. He found Captain Morrison alone, who received him with an easy kind of dignity which he by no means relished.

"You are registered upon the ship's books as John Jackson," began Morrison. "Why is this?"

"Because I chose to be known as John Jackson," answered Luke, bluntly.

"Why?" demanded Morrison.

"That is my secret," returned Luke.

"But how can you expect to keep it a secret when Martin Harewood is on board?" asked Morrison.

"He will never betray me," responded Luke, confidently.

"Because he loves your sister?"

"Exactly," returned Luke, with a knowing grin. "And somebody else will keep my secret for the same reason."

Morrison smiled disdainfully. He had as much respect for Luke Ellerby as the lordly lion has for the pitiful jackal.

"The somebody else you allude to," he returned, coldly, "does not trouble himself so much about you or your secrets as you perhaps imagine. I wish you to understand, sir, that from this time forth I only know you as John Jackson, a green hand on board this ship, of which I am captain. I shall treat you exactly as if I never saw you before. Return to the deck and attend to your duties."

Luke Ellerby withdrew in a perfect bewilderment of rage and mortification, and it would be hard to say which he now hated the most, Martin Harewood or Francis Morrison. Writhing under this new cause of vexation as he reached the deck, the first man he met was Martin Harewood.

"Martin Harewood!" he exclaimed, extending his hand.

The other did not take it, and Luke felt the hot blood mounting to his forehead. Here was another man who despised him.

"Luke Ellerby," responded Martin, coldly, and with an aversion he made no effort to conceal.

"Hush!" cried Luke; "I am known here as John Jackson. Call me by that name in future."

Martin promised to do so. It was rather a satisfaction to think that he had changed his name.

"But what of Captain Morrison?" he asked.

"Oh, he will never tell," answered Luke, lightly.

"He has good cause to be silent."

Martin coloured; he guessed what that cause was. Blandelia seemed to cast a shield over this depraved young man.

"It is strange that he should come on board as captain," remarked Martin, musingly.

"Very strange," rejoined Luke, fervently. "It must have been very annoying to him, under the circumstances," he continued.

"What circumstances?" asked Martin.

"Why, to leave his bride—on his wedding-day."

"His bride?" gasped Martin, hoarsely. "Was he married then?"

"Yes; did you not know it?"

"No; to whom?"

"Why, Blandelia, of course."

A despairing cry broke from Martin's lips; his face grew deathly white; he staggered back, and grasped the bulwark to save himself from falling.

"There's one for you, my fine fellow!" muttered Luke Ellerby, with an almost savage grin, as he turned away.

It was a bitter blow to Martin Harewood, and the brightness of his life was dimmed for ever. He could now understand Morrison's friendly advances towards him. But why should he blame him? She was to blame, the faithless coquette, who had cast him off because he was poor. And yet, after the first bitter pang had passed, he asked himself how he could blame her? Had he not given her her freedom in that mad hour of his despair? And was it not for the best? The very bitterness of the blow made the pain of short duration, as violent storms are quickly over, and he accepted his cross with patient resignation. He attended to his duties faithfully, sought to learn all he could, and gained an excellent character among the officers and crew. John Jackson had gained the reputation of being a worthless, lazy skulker, not "worth his salt," as the first mate phlegmily expressed it.

They arrived upon the cruising waters and found whales very abundant, making a good capture. Morrison was in fine spirits at the prospect of making so good a voyage, and this success would hasten their return home. So far no accident had befallen them, but this good luck was not to continue. One day the boats were out in pursuit of a whale, when the monster, maddened by repeated lance thrusts, with a last convulsive dying effort turned upon the boats and crushed one of them between its massive jaws.

Martin Harewood and Luke Ellerby were both in this boat. Martin rose to the surface of the water uninjured; but Luke was stunned amidst the fragments of the boat, and would have sunk had not Martin grasped him with one hand, and clinging to an oar with the other, held him up until the second boat came to their assistance. Strangely enough, he was the only man in the boat that was injured; the rest having jumped into the water at the moment of danger. He owed his life to Martin, but in his secret heart he hated him the more for this very act of kindness.

He kept his berth until the cargo was completed, and the vessel's bows were turned on the homeward course, and then he crawled up on deck, looking none the worse for his accident. Indeed there were many among the crew who thought he had shammed a greater portion of his illness to avoid his duties. John Jackson, as he called himself, had few friends on board.

Under the stars Martin Harewood kept his watch; under those same stars that months ago had looked down upon the murdered man's pale face by the lonely roadside; and memory went back to the happy scenes of his childhood when he had roamed hand in hand with pretty Blandelia, and called her his little wife. But how changed all was now! The joy that fills the wanderer's heart as he draws near the land of his birth was not for him. She was another's wife, and that one drop poisoned his whole cup of happiness. He cast his eye over the waste of waters that hemmed them in on every side. The drear monotony of ocean was a fitting type of the utter desolation that had fallen upon his life. One short visit to his mother, to see that she was comfortable and wanted nothing, and then for another voyage over the bounding main.

A shadow crossed the silvery sheen of the starlight; he looked up, and saw Luke Ellerby standing beside him. The night was warm and sultry, and the stars shone with unclouded brilliancy.

"A lonely watch, Martin," said Luke.

"Yes," answered Martin, curtly.

He could not like this man, or repress the aversion his presence always occasioned. Luke knew this, and generally kept himself aloof; but he had a motive, a sinister one, in coming upon deck during Martin's watch. He stole gently to his side as he stood by the wheel, for Martin had improved so much in seamanship as to be entrusted with the steering of the ship in his turn. Martin regarded him curiously. The calm starlight had sent his thoughts backward to the tragedy committed upon the lonely road on just such a night, and now the murderer stood before him, the man he had suffered to escape unwhipped of justice, and he seriously

asked himself if he had done right in sparing him. He wondered if Luke Ellerby's conscience ever troubled him with any compunctions for that dark deed.

"It's a lovely night," said Luke, standing by Martin's side, and glancing at the star-lit heavens.

Even he could appreciate the beauty of the scene—the calm, untroubled ocean below, the glittering dome above.

"Very," answered Martin, briefly; he was in no mood for converse, and especially with this man.

"We shall soon be home now," continued Luke, not appearing to notice his cool reception.

Martin sighed.

"Thinking of Blandelia," pursued Luke. "Ah! if she had been true to you, how different things would appear, eh?"

"Silence, man!" cried Martin, sternly.

It was as if a red-hot iron had been plunged through his heart. In all this time he had schooled himself to forget her, and thought he had succeeded, but these words convinced him of the fallacy of such a hope. Luke Ellerby was not to be silenced.

"She always loved you best," he proceeded. "Would gladly be yours, if she were free."

Martin groaned in the bitterness of his emotion. He knew this exhibition of feeling was a triumph to Blandelia's brother, and, though ashamed of betraying his emotion, he could not repress it for his life.

"Why not make her free?" continued Luke, covertly.

Martin stared at him in amazement.

"What do you mean?" he asked.

Luke Ellerby drew closer to his side, and sank his voice to a deep whisper.

"Do you know that lately, during these hot nights, Captain Morrison has found his cabin so close that he has taken a notion to sleeping in the boat below?"

He paused to watch the effect of his words.

"Well?" asked Martin.

"How easy it would be, when the captain was fast asleep, and you standing there above his wheel, just to slip your knife through one of the ropes; the captain would suddenly disappear, and Blandelia would be a widow, only too happy to find a second husband in her first love."

Martin tightened his grasp upon the wheel with his left hand, while with the right he grasped Luke suddenly by the throat.

"Villain!" he hissed through his set teeth—"unmitigated villain! Do you dare to make such a barefaced proposition of murder to me? Reptile! were I disposed to be the murderer you would have me, I would squeeze the life out of your cowardly carcass, and cast you over the rail into the sea to feed the fishes."

Luke Ellerby writhed like a wounded snake in the strong grasp of the exasperated man.

"Don't kill me, Martin!" he whined. "I am not fit to die."

"I know it, and therefore I spare you," returned Martin, as he relaxed his grasp. "Luke Ellerby, for the sake of that sweet angel who calls you brother, to spare her pure cheek the blush of shame, I held my tongue and allowed you, the murderer, to remain unsuspected, though stigmatised myself as the perpetrator of your crime. Thus I shielded you. Again, when the whale struck our boat, and a watery grave was before you, I upheld you at the risk of my own life. Have you been grateful for my forbearance? No! Your black heart seems incapable of one kindly feeling. You are thoroughly depraved. There is a point where forbearance ceases to be a virtue. You have reached that point. Tempt me again, and I will give you to the fate you so richly merit. Be warned, and forego your evil purposes, if it be possible."

"Why, I was only joking," cried Luke, attempting a laugh.

Martin smiled at the transparent subterfuge.

"Another such joke will cost you dear," said he, with grim determination.

Luke slunk away towards the fore-castle; but he was far from feeling penitent.

"One of us shall never set foot upon the land again," he muttered. "I'm not going home to be hanged."

This fear had possessed him ever since the ship had been put upon the homeward course. The knowledge that Martin could denounce him at any moment was like a sword of Damocles suspended over his head. It galled him beyond measure to think his life was in the hands of a man whom he hated. He had fancied that he could arouse Martin's jealousy—deeming others as depraved as himself—incite him to murder the captain, and then denounce him for the deed. It was a flimsy plot, the offspring of a weak-minded, desperate man. He was not done with scheming yet. He crouched down in the sh-



[UNDER THE STARS.]

dow of the fore-castle hatchway and watched and waited.

Captain Morrison came from the cabin, glanced at the heavens, and then approached Martin. He had treated him with much consideration during the entire voyage. That he entertained the most friendly feelings towards him was beyond a doubt. Indeed, during this voyage his bearing had surprised all who knew him. He had proved himself a capable officer, kind and indulgent to his men, but exacting a prompt attention to duty. The first mate, whom his father had relied upon to keep him straight, a thorough navigator of thirty years' experience, had been heard to say that Frank Morrison had cast aside his follies and was a man worthy to be trusted with the command. What had caused this change for the better was a mystery beyond his power to solve.

Martin Harewood had not been insensible to the kind treatment of his captain, and cheerfully gave him his respect, yet he was a little reserved in his feelings towards him. The thought that he had supplanted him in the affections of Blandelia would rattle in his mind, and curb his naturally generous heart. He was but human, and few men can look with friendly eyes upon a favoured rival. Morrison took this feeling of reserve for modesty, and liked the young man all the better for it. They would have been the best friends in the world had not this woman stood between them.

"A fine night, Martin," said Morrison.  
"Beautiful," returned Martin.

He could not but contrast this tall and manly form, with the frank brow and open eye, with the sneaking villain who had approached him with a like salutation. They were two fine specimens of manhood standing there side by side, under the stars. Tall, sinewy, and well-favoured in feature, with the bronze hue the sea gives upon their faces. Two thorough seamen that looked as if they might trace their des-

cent from the Vikings of old—those ancient bold rovers of the stormy main.

"How does she head?" asked Morrison, glancing at the stars again.

"Nor' east," answered Martin.

"Ease off a point, and keep your eye on the compass. We must not hug the land too close, for we are nearing it, I fancy."

"Ay, ay, sir," responded Martin, in true sailor fashion.

"My cabin is so sultry I cannot sleep there," continued Morrison; "so I shall try a nap here in the boat astern. We shall reach Queenstown by to-morrow night, if this wind holds. There will be some bright eyes glad to see us after a year's absence."

"Blandelia!" exclaimed Martin, unconsciously uttering his thought aloud; and the next moment he could have bitten his tongue off with vexation for having so betrayed him.

Morrison smiled significantly.

"No doubt she will be very glad to see you," he said.

"And you," returned Martin, gloomily.

"Perhaps—though I have some doubts of that," answered Morrison, carelessly.

Martin compressed his lips to check the words that were eager for an utterance. Already, it seemed, this man tired of the treasure he had won. Or had Luke really spoken the truth, and did Blandelia still love him, though she had given her hand to Morrison? It were a double perfidy unworthy of the woman he had so fondly loved.

"Martin," said Morrison, "I shall speak to my father in your behalf, and I think I can promise you a mate's berth for our next trip."

Martin would have declined this favour, he was so loath to receive anything from this man's hands, but knew not how, without appearing rude, and so

he murmured some indistinct thanks. Morrison clambered into the boat astern, and Martin was again left alone with his sad thoughts. Immersed in these reflections, he did not perceive the dark figure crawling, snake-like, under the shadow of the larboard bulwarks. This figure worked slowly and cautiously along until it reached the stern, crept up on the rail, a bright knife-blade gleamed for a moment in the starlight, and then there was a splash in the water, followed by a crash and a cry of pain, and a second splash.

Martin comprehended at once what had been done. He secured the wheel, and seeing the boat hanging by one rope, severed it with one blow of his knife, gave the alarm of "man overboard," and sprang into the sea to the assistance of the captain. He found Morrison struggling in the water, very much surprised at his sudden bath. The boat had struck the water right side up, and floated near them, though half full of water. Martin clambered into it, and seized Captain Morrison. The crew by this time were thoroughly aroused. The vessel was hoisted, another boat lowered to their assistance, and they were soon placed on the deck of the Golden Cross again.

Where was the would-be assassin all this time? Martin saw no one when he turned to the captain's aid, though he had a shrewd suspicion who had done the deed. He confided this suspicion to the captain, as he felt in duty bound, and Luke Ellerby was immediately sought for; but though every part of the vessel was thoroughly searched, he was nowhere to be found, and it became evident that he was not on board.

Martin then remembered the cry he had heard the moment after the captain had fallen into the water, and his inference was that Luke had lost his balance while cutting away the rope, fallen, struck his head against the boat, and, stunned by the blow, had plunged to a watery grave. It was a fitting close to his dark career.

"Why should he attempt my life?" asked Captain Morrison, as they conferred together in the cabin after the search for Luke Ellerby had ended.

Martin recounted the main facts of the conversation Luke had held with him while at the wheel.

"But why did he think he could instigate you to such a deed?" inquired Morrison.

"Because—" began Martin, and there he hesitated.

"Because what?"

"Because you are the husband of Blandelia," answered Martin, bluntly.

Morrison was very much surprised at this answer.

"Who told you I was the husband of Blandelia?" he asked, regarding Martin curiously.

"Luke Ellerby—when we first sailed."

"Indeed! What could have been his motive for such a falsehood? Faltry spite against you, I suppose?"

Martin was staring at him in open-eyed wonder. "Falsehood?" he gasped.

"Certainly. Blandelia rejected me the day before we set sail—rejected me so scornfully that I felt ashamed of myself, and resolved to turn over a new leaf, as the saying is, for the future. It is my opinion she has loved you all along, and will be only too glad to welcome you back."

Martin Harewood sought his pillow that night with a happier heart than he had known for many a day. The morning found him early astir, and now looking eagerly for the wished-for land—the land that contained the girl who had been true to him after all—his own Blandelia.

The next day at sundown land was sighted, and soon the good ship lay moored in port, and Martin was free to seek his home. Though nearly ten o'clock at night, his impatience could not brook delay, and he hastened over the well-known road. He reached Blandelia's cottage first. The faithful watch dog knew him, and bayed a cheerful welcome. Blandelia, aroused by the noise, came from the door, and under the stars they met, after this long separation.

"Oh, Martin!" she cried, with heartfelt joy, "I am so glad to see you back."

"Not more than I am to return home, and to you," he answered, as he pressed her to his heart in a fond embrace.

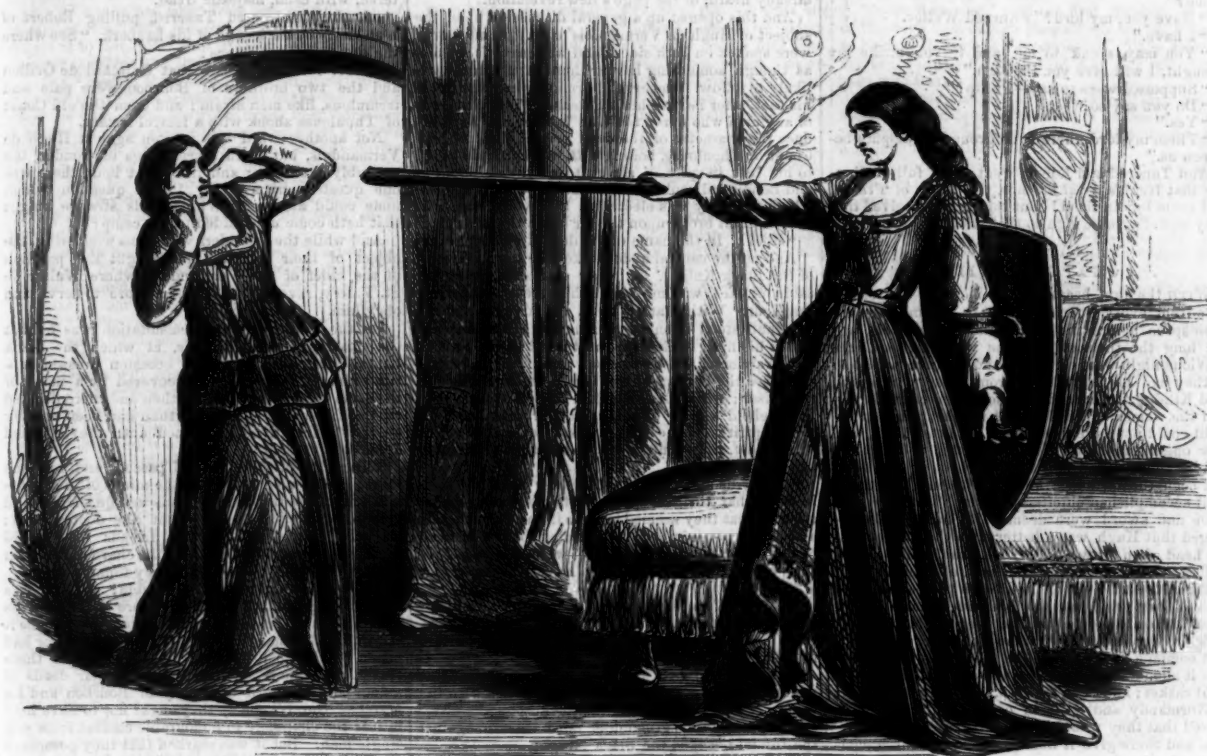
We need not linger over their conversation.

Francis Morrison was as good as his word, and got Martin the berth of second mate on board the Golden Cross; he was not satisfied with this, but insisted upon being Martin's best man at his marriage with Blandelia, and furnished the wedding dinner.

Blandelia was the only one—her parents were dead—who made any inquiries after Luke Ellerby. She was satisfied that he was "lost overboard." His crimes were never known, for Martin Harewood, out of respect to his wife's feelings, faithfully kept his secret.

G. L. A.





[GERTRUDE'S PLAYTHINGS.]

## THE BLACK KNIGHT'S CHALLENGE.

BY THE

Author of "Florian," "Cordelia's Fortune," &amp;c., &amp;c.

### CHAPTER XVII.

COMING up the road was a knight clad in complete armour, and mounted upon a powerful horse; and it was observed that he closed his visor when they appeared in the path before him. A nobler presence Tancred swore he had never seen. And well might he say so. In stature the stranger was of that fair, medium proportion most favourable to compactness and vigour of body, while his erect and easy bearing bespoke grace and self-reliance. But the chief peculiarity—that which struck our friends as solemnly prophetic—was the funeral hue of the whole strange presence. The knight's armour, from top to toe, was utterly black; the closely-fitting and admirably adapted plates seeming to be enamelled in jet; and three towering ostrich plumes, as black as the plumage of the raven, surmounted the sable head and crest. The horse was evidently an Andalusian; large and powerful, and of a form so symmetrical that the most practised eye could find no fault; and its colour was black—not a spot, not a hair, to break the solemn hue. The knight's lance was black; his scabbard black; and all the trappings of both man and beast, even to the bars of the bits, were the same. In short, a statue cut from a block of pure jet could not have been more evenly and entirely black.

Tancred and his party reached the highway just as the stranger came up, and the former looked to see if there were any device upon any part of the black armour; but none was to be seen. The stranger was the first to speak.

"In the name of God and St. Denis, I give you Christian greeting, brothers all!"

"In the name of God and His Holy Son, whom we serve, we welcome thee to our companionship," replied Tancred.

"Meeting thee here," pursued the stranger, "gives me the hope that I am not far from the Christian camp. I have had a toilsome ride, brothers; and more than once have I disputed the way with intruding Infidels."

"And hast thou come to join the crusaders, Sir Stranger?"

"Yes; and other lances will be with me in time. I rode on in advance, anxious to meet my noble

friend, the Prince of Vermandois. Can you lead me to his tent? Ha! Why start ye in such blank amazement?"

"Wouldst thou know the prince?" asked Robert of Normandy.

At that moment, even as the Norman spoke, the gaze of the Black Knight had rested upon the horse that bore the melancholy burden, and as he saw the limp and lifeless form, the mail broken and dabbled with gore—as he saw that princely surcoat, with its royal emblazonry torn and disfigured—and as he saw the dark, horrible drops that hung quivering from the bars of the silver helm, he seemed at once to comprehend the fearful truth.

"My life upon it!" he cried, raising his mailed hand towards the ghastly scene, "that is Hugh's full garb, as he wore it on the field in Paris. Tell me—hath ill befallen him? Where is Walter de St. Valery?"

"Here I am," answered the esquire, advancing, and at the same time gazing eagerly up at the bars of the black visor, to catch, if possible, a glimpse of the features beneath.

"Speak, Walter, speak, and tell me what hath befallen thy noble master."

Then, partly from Walter, and partly from Tancred and Robert, the stranger gained the whole story. It was told in oddly disconnected sentences, and with many sighs and moans; but in the end the new-comer had heard all that was necessary to make him understand that the Prince of Vermandois had been most wickedly traduced and betrayed; and that in a temporary fit of insanity, induced partly by his sufferings, and partly by poison, he had thrown away a life which he feared had been darkened for ever.

The Black Knight listened to the end, and then, letting go his rein, he raised his clasped hands on high, and solemnly spoke as follows:

"Before Thee, thou God of my fathers, I give myself to the avenging and the justification of Hugh of Vermandois; which work, I swear I will do! And until my oath is fulfilled, the light of day shall not shine upon my face!" Hear me heaven, and record my vow!"

Then lowering his hands, he turned to the company before him:

"Brethren in arms," he continued, in a tone of peculiar earnestness, "I have a favour to crave at your hands. If I have dropped a word, or given a sign,

\* It was very common in those days for a knight who had taken it upon himself to redress some grievous wrong, to swear that he would not raise his visor to the light until the work had been accomplished.

that may lead you to suspect me, keep your thoughts to yourselves until I may choose to expose my face to the world. I have a reason for asking this; and I know that you will give me frank acquittal when you know all."

"By my life!" cried Tancred, looking hard into the dim interstices of the black visor, "thou hast given me no such sign."

"Nor me," added Robert of Normandy.

And they all were equally ready to swear ignorance save Walter de St. Valery. He alone seemed to have hit a suspicion that found lodgment in his mind; and when the party had once more started on its way, he rode to the stranger's side.

"Sir Stranger," he said, "to show thee that I put full confidence in the avowal thou hast made, and that I hold thee as a friend to my master's memory, I offer thee rest in his pavilion."

"Hast thou authority so to do, good Walter?"

"Yes, my—lord."

The esquire spoke the last word very reluctantly, and with much hesitation; whereupon the other quickly responded:

"I have a right to the title, Walter. I accept the offer gladly, though heaven knows it must be an aching heart I bear to the couch where Hugh hath rested!"

It was late in the day when the mournful cavalcade drew up before the head-quarters of the Department of the Vermandois; and like wild-fire spread the startling intelligence that Prince Hugh was dead. Some few, even on that first evening, gained a knowledge of the truth as it appeared from what had been discovered; but by far the greater portion of the crusaders heard wild and exaggerated stories, as false as they were ridiculous and improbable.

### "THE BLACK KNIGHT!"

That name, ere many hours, had been upon every lip; and as it was necessarily associated with the death of the French prince, it created an excitement second only to that resulting from the latter event. Thousands of men tried to get a sight at the mysterious stranger before the darkness fairly threw its curtain over the scene; but they were disappointed. He had entered the pavilion of the prince immediately on his arrival, and had not come forth since.

Very late at night—nearly the fourth hour—Tancred and Robert of Normandy, arm-in-arm, approached the quarters of Vermandois, and were fortunate enough to find Walter without calling for him.

"Good Walter," said Tancred, "the pledge which we gave the Black Knight need not prevent us, who were then present, from mentioning our suspicions

to each other. Have you not an idea of that man's name?"

"Have you, my lord?" returned Walter.

"I have."

"You may speak to me, and if you strike my thought, I will give you the sign."

"Suppose I were to say—Philip?"

"Do you say so?"

"Yes."

"Then, my lord, there is no ground for dispute between us."

And Tancred and Robert went away fully believing that Hugh's royal brother, the King of France, had come to join them! But they were resolved that they would give no sign to that effect.

#### CHAPTER XVIII.

WITH the first beams of the morning the crusaders from every quarter began to assemble in the open space before the pavilion of Vermandois, and ere long the thousand and one wild stories of the previous night were corrected, and the facts were told as they had been gathered from those who knew. Had Kilidge Arslan made a descent and carried away half the women and children of the camp the excitement could not have been more intense; for it was now openly acknowledged, by knight and esquire, and by noble and prince, that Hugh de Vermandois had been the strongest knight of them all, and the most accomplished chieftain. Even Tancred, whose lance and sword were deemed invincible, acknowledged that Hugh was a better man than himself at the head of an army. "Because," said the generous Italian, "he held a better command over himself."

The nearest friends of the French prince consulted with Walter, and it was finally decided that the body should be embalmed as well as they could do it. Alberic having declared that he could so preserve it that common decay would be effectually arrested—that it should be embalmed, and secured in an airtight casket; and then Tancred, together with Robert of Normandy and Stephen of Blois and Chartres, vowed that they would bear it with them to Jerusalem, and there give it final sepulchre in thrice-consecrated ground.

And now, how looked the chiefs of the army upon this death? All were horrified; but many there were who shook their heads with the belief that the suicide of the prince was an evidence of guilt. Had he been innocent, he might have known that in time his innocence would have been proved; this rash step, therefore, gave strong evidence against his own assurance of right.

Some time during the night Guiscard de Grillon had gained access to Roland the page, and on this morning the lad had asked to take back the testimony he had given against his uncle. He said now, that he had given it because he feared his head would be cut off if he did not. When asked to explain the circumstance of the wine, he said that some weeks before, when he was ill, Peter, one of the physicians in Count Raymond's quarter, had given him some medicine. He had not used the whole of it, and when he saw his master ill it occurred to him that the same medicine might be good for him; so he mixed it with the wine Sir Hugh was to drink. The physician, Peter, was called; and he bore out the boy's testimony so far as his part in the transaction was concerned; and when asked the nature of the medicine he said it had been a vegetable preparation which was entirely innocent in its fresh state, but which became very nauseous and almost poisonous when kept long enough to ferment. This latter fact he had not mentioned to Roland, because he had no thought of the medicine being kept so long.

This story, so ridiculous and so improbable, had its effect, the result of which was that Hugh's chief traducers were permitted to be present and take part in the consultation which somehow improvised itself in Godfrey's pavilion on the very day succeeding the death.

Tancred and Robert had gone first to relate to Godfrey de Bouillon the circumstances attending the finding of the body of their grand master. It happened that Raymond of Thoulouse, with his Captain of Grillon and the brothers of Bourbon, had also sought Godfrey to tell the story of the page's recantation. Seeing these knights going towards Godfrey's pavilion, others of the chiefs had come up, until at length more than a thousand of the leading men of the army had assembled there without summons; and when the place was so nearly filled that not many more could gain accommodation within, Tancred arose, at the earnest request of many true knights, and told the sad story he had come to tell to Godfrey.

When Tancred had resumed his seat, Robert of Normandy desired to know how Guiscard de Grillon, Peter of Bourbon, and Arnold of the Marche dared to be present in that assembly.

This called forth the story, which the reader has already heard, of the page's new revelation.

And this opened up a general discussion upon the subject of Hugh de Vermandois' case. Loud words were spoken on both sides, and at length it seemed as though something harder than hard words was likely to follow. Robert of Normandy had just taken his seat, after having hurled defiance into the teeth of any man who dared to stand before him and traduce the character of the dead prince, and the old Count of Thoulouse, boiling with passion, had started to his feet in spite of all that Godfrey de Bouillon and Bohémund could do to maintain peace, when the whole assembly was electrified by a voice which at that moment broke upon the air like a thunderbolt:

"Hold! In the name of the dead, I command it!"

And up the central aisle stalked the towering form of the Black Knight, his visor shut close, and the sable plumes waving above his crest in solemn grandeur. With stately tread he advanced to the dais, and stood upon it, and having gracefully inclined his head to Godfrey, he turned to the assembled warriors. Those who sat in a line before him could see the burning fire of two lustrous orbs within that visor; while all who gazed knew full well that they beheld a man of might and prowess. Had a robber spirit from the upper world come down into their midst, they could not have been more strangely and deeply moved.

"My lords and gentlemen, answer me!" he said, in tones that thrilled them to the very soul—tones so deep that they seemed to come from a closed tomb, and yet as powerful as ever sounded above the shock of battle. "You have come to wreathe the sepulchre from the hands of the infidel. Have you yet fought a battle?"

For a little time there was a dead silence, all seeming to shrink from meeting the strange presence, even in speech; but at length the Prince of Otranto replied:

"Yes, Sir Knight; we have not been idle all this while. We have had several light battles with the enemy outside, and one grand attack upon the city."

"Did Hugh de Vermandois raise his arm against the infidel?" asked the Black Knight.

Tancred and Robert of Normandy, with the Count of Flanders and he of Blois and Chartres, were upon their feet in a moment; but Tancred led the speech:

"Aye; Hugh de Vermandois it was who advanced farthest upon the walls, and who did more deeds of valour on that day than were ever done by a single man before. I saw himself hold his place against a full score of infidel swords, and the tower would have been carried if he had been supported."

And a hundred voices said, "Aye, and Amen!" "Answer me again!" pursued the stranger, in the same commanding tone. "Can any man say that Hugh de Vermandois did ever lift his arm against the cause of the Cross?"

For a few seconds there was a solemn silence; and then Tancred, advancing to the open space before the dais, proclaimed:

"If any man hath it in his heart to answer to the prejudice of Prince Hugh in this, he is a liar! and the truth is not in him!"

And as he thus spoke, he drew off his gauntlet and cast it upon the ground.

Another silence, during which the true-hearted Italian gazed around upon the assembled knights, to see if any chose to accept the alternative which he had offered, and then he turned to the stranger knight.

"Sir Knight, no man can say that."

And then he of the sable armour raised his hand, and spoke again:

"Oh, ye ungrateful brethren of a true and gallant knight! Ere yet the tear of grief hath been wiped from the eyes of mourning friends, and while the ghastly emblem of mortality hath not yet received the honours of a funeral rite, ye assemble here, and make loud accusations against him whose arm ye no more fear. Before God, Hugh of Vermandois was innocent of even a thought against the cause he had espoused; and henceforth I am his champion and vindicator. Let the days elapse which common decency should give to mourning for the dead, and then I will present my body to judgment, and with lance, sword, and axe, I will maintain the right! and let not any man who hath traduced the noble prince flatter himself that he can escape the ordeal. For, by the Creator, whose patronage I crave, I do swear this thing! Him, who hath of his own free will declared Hugh de Vermandois was a traitor, and who shall refuse the trial of arms I offer, I will seek in the centre of the camp, and will there smite him in the face for a liar and a coward! I claim five days of repose from my wearisome journey—which five days methinks should be given to the memory of the dead; and on the sixth day from this, I will hold myself against all comers. Heaven save the right!"

And having spoken thus, the sable knight stepped

down from the dais, and stalked out as he had entered, with calm, majestic tread.

"Look!" whispered Tancred, pulling Robert of Normandy by the sleeve of his hauberk. "See where the cowed cravens wince!"

Robert looked, and saw that Guiscard de Grillon and the two brothers of Bourbon were pale and tremulous, like men afraid; and even the old Count of Thoulouse shook with a fearful tremor.

Not another word was spoken against Hugh de Vermandois, but, with murmurings of wonder, the assembly broke up; and from that hour there was one question upon every lip—a question which none could answer: "Who is this strange knight that hath come unheralded to our camp?"

And while the crusaders were thus wondering, the object of their curiosity had sought the pavilion of the chief of the Vermandois, where Walter de St. Valery, reverently kneeling, swore to serve and obey him.

On the following day a consultation was held at the quarters of Vermandois, at which the Black Knight was present, on this occasion dressed in a suit of black velvet, his face covered by a mask of the same colour; and it was then and there decided that no funeral rites, farther than had been already observed, should be performed until they reached Jerusalem.

Three days of the fire had passed, and but one theme had seemed to occupy the minds of the Christian knights in that camp. Guiscard de Grillon and his two companions moved about like doomed men; and when they sought to find friends who would unite with them in maintaining the charge of treason against Hugh de Vermandois, they found not one.

And why should such men tremble? Where was there a knight who had boasted more of his prowess than had he of Grillon? Aye, and he had not done it all vainly; for many a true and stalwart warrior had bitten the dust before him. And where were there two who had more loudly prated of their deeds of valour and strength than they of Bourbon and La Marche? Surely such as they ought not to have held in fear the challenge to honourable combat from any single man. But it was marked that they possessed not their wonted spirit; and Tancred was not far from the truth when he declared to a companion that they were haunted by a dread spectre in the guise of a Black Knight.

Three days had passed, and the evening was at hand—a calm, beautiful evening, with a bright, full moon just rising above the tops of the eastern hills, casting upon the camp of the crusaders a soft, silvery sheen that held to view every tent and every banner, rendering secrecy of movement a difficult thing. Still it was evening; and the busy hum of the day was done, and the warriors were seeking their rest.

Walter de St. Valery had just been out to observe where the moon was, and had reported to the black stranger that the third hour of the night was well-nigh spent, when an intruder glided unbidden into pavilion. Walter's hand had found the hilt of his dagger, when the light of the lamp revealed the features of Hassan, the Ishmaelian.

"Do mine eyes behold the stranger who hath but recently arrived in the East?" the intruder asked.

"I am he," replied the Black Knight.

"My Thrice Illustrious Master," pursued Hassan, speaking rapidly, but calmly and distinctly, "who hath his servants in every quarter of the world, and from whom nothing can be hidden, hath sent me unto you with most important information. Let this have attention first, and then shall come that which alone concerns the dwellers within this pavilion. This night, ere the sixth hour is gone, Kilidge Arslan, at the head of a hundred thousand men, will sweep down upon your camp from the mountains; and he thinks he will completely rout and destroy the whole Christian army."

"But," said the knight, in surprise, "only this very day, now gone, spies came hither with sure intelligence that the sultan had drawn his army away to the south."

"That was for deception. Not more than ten thousand men marched away; and even they may come back."

"And when will the infidel strike?"

"He may strike within an hour. My master had information from one who cannot be mistaken." Hassan cast a quick glance around the apartment, and then added, in a lower tone, "Do you think the mighty Hashishin could fail to gain knowledge whence it pleased him? Do you think the Sultan of Roum could live if the Old Man of the Mountain were to speak his doom? Know ye that my own brother is Kilidge Arslan's chief page!"

Aye, both the knight and the esquire realised how wondrously subtle was the power wielded by this white-haired assassin; but they had no time then for consideration of that subject. Placing full con-



fidence in Hassan, and understanding his hint, they saw that the information concerning Kildge Arslan's proposed attack had come from one who held place near that chieftain's person; and straightway they resolved to act. But had Hassan any idea of the manner in which the Turk would come?

"Yes," replied the guard. "The first swoop is to be made upon the quarter farthest to the north, away from the city. Those will be light, fleet horsemen, who can fly about at pleasure, and no great work will they seek to do; because, when the suddenly started Christians have been drawn in that direction, the sultan, with his main army, will fall upon the quarter of Godfrey de Bouillon with all his might, and thence sweep in and spread destruction with an unsparring hand."

"There is no time to be lost, good Walter," said the Black Knight, casting off a velvet robe, which he had donned for the evening. "Go you to the quarters of our captains, and bid each one that he calleth his men, and holdeth himself in readiness to follow me. Then send word to the Italian quarter; then to De Bouillon, and let them call the rest. Our good Hassan will arm me. Is it not so?"

The *Fidai* gave a ready assent, and then to Walter he of the sable presence, added:

"Give strict injunctions that not a herald sounds his loud-mouthed trumpet. These must be no note of warning to let the infidel know that we are aware of his purpose."

With this, the equires hurried away, and very soon the notes of preparation sounded through the camp, and not a moment had the crusaders to rest upon their arms; for within one hour after Hassan entered the pavilion of Vermandois, the night was made hideous by the wild war-cries of a thousand Moslems, that came sweeping out of the mountain forest upon the quarter of Robert of Flanders. They spread over a vast area of the plain, as they swiftly advanced; but a careful eye could have seen that, though occupying so much space, they were really few in number; and, furthermore, that instead of hurrying to the charge, they circled around, and swayed to and fro, evidently for the purpose of consuming time. The Count of Flanders was himself sufficient for the defence of this point; and when the matter had been explained to him, he readily undertook it.

Meantime, the main army had been drawn up near the quarter of Godfrey de Bouillon, the mounted knights and men-at-arms so disposed among the tents that the flashing of their bright armour and spear-heads in the moonbeams should not expose them to an advancing foe.

The conflict to the north had raged but a little while, when the attacking party turned as if to flee; and at that juncture Bohemond, who held a position well in advance, observed a dark mass separating itself from the distant wood. On it came, spreading and swelling—noiselessly at first—on with swifter motion, until at length, when it had come so near that the tramp of the horses could be heard, one wild, prolonged cry, like the howling of a thousand demons of storm and tempest, broke upon the Christian camp; and ere the quake had ceased its reverberations, full twenty thousand Moslems came thundering down the plain.

As if by the touch of a magician's wand, a serried rank of iron-clad warriors appeared between the camp of the crusaders and the advancing foe; and ere the latter could draw a rein, to wheel either to the right hand or to the left, another war-cry shook the air, and, at the very first shock, more than a thousand Turks went down.

"It is the will of God! It is the will of God!" shouted the crusaders, as they met, and beat back the enemy at every point.

"Behold that man!" exclaimed Tancred, pointing with his dripping axe.

"Aye, I have marked him well," answered Bohemond, twisting off a broken bar of his visor. "See that stout Saracen go down. What an arm!"

It was of the Black Knight they spoke.

One valiant chief there was at this moment in deadly peril. A score of Turks had slipped in among the tents of the quarter De Montpellier—one of Raymond's divisions—and, having seized a mass of booty, together with a young Christian maiden, they were making off, when Count Raymond discovered them, and, without waiting to see if any of his knights or men-at-arms were with him, he plunged on in pursuit. Being mounted upon the best horse in the camp, he gained rapidly upon the fleeing Turks, and very shortly he dashed in among them, and smote him who bore the maiden to death. One loud cry from the Moslem chief caused the whole party to come to a sudden halt, and before he could remember how he had brought himself into such a strait, the old count found almost a score of stout Turkish warriors charging upon him—and he alone to meet them!

For a while, Raymond of Thoulouse held his own, his armour of finely-tempered steel safely turning such blows as he could not avoid, or turn off from his buckler. Four of the infidels had gone down beneath the blows of his axe—four beside him who bore the maiden; but they still pressed upon him as hard as ever, and he was just muttering to himself that this was his last battle, when a new shout broke upon his ear, arousing him to hope once more.

"God and Saint Denis!" was the note of war that sounded above the clang of arms, and in a moment more the Black Knight was by Raymond's side. Like an avenging demon launched into the midst of condemned spirits, came the sable warrior, and beneath the swift-falling blows of his trenchant axe, the Turks went down like heads of corn before the knife of the reaper; and ere long, those of the turbaned riders who still lived were seized with mortal dread, and sought safety in flight.

"You were rash, air count," said the Black Knight, when it was clear that the enemy had no thought of turning back. "Raymond of Thoulouse needs not to undertake such hazardous work to prove his bravery to those who know him. See, the maiden waits for you."

And before the astounded count could speak a word of reply, the strange knight had ridden away towards the camp, where he arrived to find that the enemy had been entirely and disastrously routed; all who were not prisoners having fled back into the mountains.

#### CHAPTER XIX.

It had been whispered all through Nice, that the Emir Abu Hassa held a Christian maiden in captivity, whom he dared not meet in open combat; that she was very beautiful, and that he was dying of passion for her love; but that she held her love to be won by the lance and sword, and that the old emir had not yet dared to meet her in the list. Some scoffed at the story, treating it as an idle fable; but by far the majority of the inhabitants believed it. They believed it because Zyr had said so, and Zyr knew everything that transpired in the emir's palace.

This Zyr was a giant, of such prodigious strength, that no four men were to be found in Nice who could stand against him. He was full ten spans in height, and of a firm and muscular build; and he it was who, in steel armour, with a towering crest upon his helm, had repeatedly gone outside the walls and challenged any Christian knight to single combat.

More than once had Tancred started to accept the braggart's challenge; and once had Bohemond and Robert of Normandy; for the giant's taunts were so insulting, that they caused the brave knights of the Christian host to boil with indignation; but wise and cool counsellors had kept the venturesome nobles back, bidding them remember that they had no right to throw their lives away.

Zyr was an emir, and a brother of Abu Hassa; and he declared upon his oath that his elder brother was afraid of the Christian maiden. But Zyr had a purpose in this. He greatly desired that Abu should meet the maiden, and be defeated, in which event he hoped to win the beautiful woman for himself; for he possessed a susceptible heart, and the charms of his brother's prisoner had not been lost upon him.

At length it came to the ears of the emir that his soldiers talked in their quarters of their chieftain who was afraid of a woman; and it may be that the Princess Gertrude was indebted for the consideration to be shown her to a conversation which her master overheard one day while he was passing through an out-of-the-way part of his palace. It was in a wing where old lumber was stored, and whither the emir had been to search for a rusty suit of mail which had been consigned to the lumber room some months before, and from which he wished to obtain a pattern for one of his armours. He was stepping out from a closet-like apartment into a corridor which ran along by the side of the soldiers' quarters, when the pronunciation of his own name arrested his attention. It was an open space high up in the partition, that admitted the voices to his ears, while his person was entirely concealed.

"If Abu Hassa knew what a feeling existed among his followers, he would be surprised and mortified," said one voice.

"Aye," responded another, "and I think he would give the beautiful Frank her wish. 'Death! it is ridiculous to suppose that a woman could overcome the stout emir in battle.'"

"I don't know," added a third speaker. "It hath been said that the maiden, despite her beauty, is marvellously strong. One of the emir's officers, in a gallant manner, offered her a kiss one day; and it is reported that she struck him a blow which knocked him down. But that should not frighten the emir.

I have heard honest men declare that they should fear to follow him to battle."

"More than that," said the first speaker. "Some of the very best of Abu Hassa's officers will request to be sent to some other command. They swear by the beard of the Prophet, that they will not follow a man who fears a woman."

"But," suggested a new speaker, "may not the emir be influenced by emotions of gallantry? May it not be the thought of raising a mortal weapon against a woman that deters him?"

"No, no," replied one of the others. "He is afraid of her. Has she not declared that she would be his if he can overcome her with lance and sword? Surely it doth appear that his love must either be very tame, or his fear very strong; and I'll take my oath upon the Koran that his love hath not one whit of lameness."

At this the party laughed heartily, and all finally joined in the opinion that the emir was afraid.

Abu Hassa walked away, very busily engaged in thought. One thing gave him torment of reflection. Brave men had wished to leave his command because they thought him a coward. And then he said to himself:

"I will no longer let my prejudices govern me. She hath for the time unsexed herself in usurping man's province of battle, and I will regard her as a man, and dread the conflict no more."

Now in this the emir told himself that which was not exactly true. It had not been the fear of raising his arm against a woman that had held him back; nor had it been solely the fear of defeat, for Abu Hassa was not a coward in that direction; but it had been the dread of giving to history the sentence: "The Emir Abu Hassa was felled, in single combat, by the hand of a woman!"

But even that should restrain him no more. Ere he had reached his closet he had resolved that Gertrude's challenge should be accepted at once; and he furthermore resolved that he would overcome her—without bodily harm, if he could; but, let the end be what it would, even to the losing of her in death, it should never be said that a daughter of the Christians, whose love he had sought, had conquered him in a trial at arms.

And there was another consideration that bore much weight of influence. Though he had no fear of the crusaders entering Nice as conquerors, yet he doubted if the knights with whom he had corresponded would be able to induce their companions to raise the siege, now that it had been begun; and if the sultan should finally give up and withdraw, and the city should surrender to the Greek Emperor, these crusaders would be privileged to enter; and then, if he had not already won the maiden, he would be very sure to lose her.

The evening was calm and beautiful, the full, bright moon silencing with its beams the roofs and towers of the city, while the aroma of opening buds and dew-dipped blossoms loaded the air with a delicious fragrance. Gertrude, the Christian captive, sat by an open window, looking out upon the scene, ever and anon speaking with herself or answering some question put by the girl who attended her.

"Nicetta, how many guards doth the emir employ to keep a watch upon me?"

The princess asked the question suddenly, withdrawing her gaze from the scene without, and looking up into the face of the maid, who chanced to be passing at that instant.

"I mean," added Gertrude, who saw that the girl did not fully comprehend her, "how many people Abu Hassa employs to care for me, who would not be employed if I were not here?"

Nicetta reflected, and finally replied that she was sure that there were at least a hundred men who did nothing but guard her mistress.

"And yet," cried Gertrude, "he keeps me here swearing that he is dying of love for me, and will not accept the terms I offer."

"If you speak of the battle, my lady, I think you may make your mind easy; for this very evening I heard the giant Zyr declare that his brother had resolved to fight you."

"Ha! say ye so?"

"Even so, lady."

"Then bring me the bar and the buckler! Oh! if he does this, I am saved."

Nicetta retired to an adjoining closet, and presently returned, dragging in a bar of iron full five spans in length, and almost as large around as her own delicate wrist. This she dragged to the lady's side, and returned with a heavy shield of the same metal.

These things, which the sprightly girl had found almost beyond her power to lift, seemed as implements of dry wood in the hands of the mistress. Slipping her left arm into the leathern buckets of the shield, with the free hand she grasped the iron bar, and began to whirl it about in a manner which to Nicetta was strange and unaccountable. Sometimes in

a circle; then to and fro and up and down; then a succession of thrusts; and then, poised at arm's length, she held it so steadily that the point thereof did not quiver an atom.

"By the Mass!" she cried, as she thus stood—erect and firm; the line of her back perfectly straight, her arm extended at a right angle from her side, and the bar, held by one extreme end, poised in a direct horizontal line—"let Abu Hassa do that if he can! I defy him. Ho! my gentle Nicetta, you need have no cause for fear if you see me arrayed in arms against the emir. My wrist was never before so strong as it is now; and never before was my whole body in such perfect harmony of strength. I have no doubt that these things appear very curious to you; but where so much—aye, more than life—depends upon the result of battle, one must have the physical strength to succeed; and that strength can only be kept up by persistent exercise. Just think of it, Nicetta: one little quiver of this good right wrist before its time might lose the victory, and bring—*are defeat.*"

Nicetta's eyes sparkled with satisfaction, because she saw from the manner of her mistress that she was confident of success; and if all this strange whirling and poising of iron bars, and swinging and surging of heavy wooden lances, and imaginary attacks and defences with ponderous old swords—if all these had helped to fit the lady for the work of battle, then she was glad that she had been forced, night after night, to witness the exhibition.

Aye, Gertrude of Thoulouse knew too well the value of practice to neglect it, in view of the work which she might possibly have to do, and she neglected no means within her reach to keep her muscles in tune, and her powers of physical endurance up to the right pitch. And in this respect she knew she should have an advantage over the emir. He, by nature indolent and fond of ease, took exercise at arms only when forced; and, though gifted with a goodly share of strength, he would be likely to fail under protracted effort.

"Hark! Someone approaches. Away with these playthings, Nicetta!"

Hardly had the closet door been closed upon the strange "playthings" of the princess, when another door was opened, and a female attendant announced that the emir was in waiting.

Nicetta withdrew, and Abu Hassa was ushered in. He approached the Christian maiden with a look of admiration, and when quite near he stopped and gazed upon her lovely face. Never, never had she looked more beautiful. Never had his eyes rested upon such a picture of female loveliness.

Ah! could he have known what had given that rich colour to her face, what had sent the warm blood to her cheeks and temples, and what caused the swelling of that full bosom—could he have known this, he might have found his reflections somewhat distracted from the simple contemplation of her beauty.

A few of the old love passages which he had been wont, from time to time, to recite in her presence, a few fresh compliments adapted to the occasion, and then the emir said:

"Sweet lady, even now my heart rebels at the thought of poisoning a lance at such as thou, and of raising a sword against such loveliness; but if thou wilt have it so, what can I do? Is your determination unchanged?"

"It is, emir," replied the princess, calmly and serenely; for her late exercise had imparted a vigour to her system that made her feel strong.

"You demand that I meet you in the list, there to fight as though you were a redoubtable warrior?"

"I demand that you give me that opportunity to win my freedom. You will fight as you please. If you love me as you say, and if you would not have me return to the Christian camp, and there find love in the heart of someone of mine own people, you will use all the power you can to overcome me."

The perfect coolness of the maiden, and the satisfaction she evinced at the thought of conquering him in the list, fired the emir with anger, and starting to his feet, he exclaimed:

"By Allah! thou shalt have thy wish! Already do mine own people begin to fancy that I am afraid to meet a woman in battle. Aye, they talk it openly. But they shall have no more ground for such suspicion, nor shalt thou have cause to taunt me more."

To-morrow we will meet in the list, and I swear to thee by the beard of the prophet, that I'll spare thee not one jot! Mark that!"

"If thou dost spare me, emir, it will be upon thine own head, for I swear to thee that I'll put forth all the power I possess to bring thee to the ground!"

"Enough. To-morrow be it."

"Remember, emir, thou didst promise me that four good knights might attend from the Christian army."

"No. I said three."

"Well, three be it, then. Shall they have safe entrance, and shall they have safe departure?"

"I have sworn it. Let them come alone to the Gate of the Dragon, and they shall be admitted."

"And, if I am victor, I shall go forth with them?"

"I have sworn it!"

"Emir Abu Hassa," spoke the princess, arising and standing before him, "it is no secret to you that a slave of the Old Man of the Mountain is in my service, and that he bath companions always near to watch over his outgoings and incomings. Hashishin will not help me to leave you by stealth; but should you break your pledged word touching the result of this battle, or should harm befall one of these Christian knights—"

The emir put forth his hand and stopped her. He was pale, and the tremor that shook his frame told very plainly that the thought of awaking the vengeance of the dread Chief of the Mountain filled him with terror.

"I know," he cried. "I know all about it. Thou hast my oath. The three knights shall have safe entrance within our city, and they shall depart in safety when they please. But they shall only enter at the Gate of the Dragon, pass at once to the battle-field, and, in the end, return as they came. They are not to view the walls. As for thyself, gentle lady, be sure I shall keep thee behind."

Gertrude started.

"I mean that thou, not I, shall be overcome in the list."

The princess bowed, and the emir withdrew.

Within an hour of that time Hassan glided into Gertrude's apartment.

"Oh! good Hassan, it hath come at last! Where is my armour?"

"I have it where my hands can touch it readily, lady."

"Bring it to me this very night—immediately. I will wait!"

The *Fidai* withdrew, and in less than an hour he returned, bearing with him the armour of the princess, which, when she beheld it, she knelt down and fondly embraced, shedding tears of joy and gratitude.

"Hassan, away now to the Christian camp; and be thou the guide for my three knights on the morrow. The third hour of the day is the time fixed."

Shortly after this Gertrude retired, and never had she a sleep more sound and refreshing. She was aroused in the morning by a loud din without the palace, and upon going to the window she saw a crowd of soldiers collected in the court, and the burden of their excited eager speech, as it reached her ears, was of the coming battle between the Emir Abu Hassa and the Christian Princess, Gertrude!

(To be continued.)

## SCIENCE.

### ESSENCE OF DISEASE.

ALL disease may be said to be founded in an unequal distribution of the blood, while its equilibrium is essential to high health and manly vigour.

While it is true that too much blood at a particular part of the body causes a diseased condition of that part, such as headache, if in the head, the same amount of blood may give two very different manifestations, according to the set of vessels which contain that excess of blood, whether artery or vein.

Many know the difference between a dull, heavy, depressing headache which invites repose, and the sharp, piercing pain which makes sleep an impossibility: between the burning feet in some forms of dyspepsia, which makes standing on the snow a perfect luxury, and the cold, clammy sweat of cholera consumption.

The blood is distributed to the body through the veins and arteries, and where there is an artery there must be a vein. The blood flows through the veins like a slow, steady river; but through the arteries like the dash of the leaping waters.

When there is too much blood in the veins, it is called "congestion," because it packs, it gorges, it dams up; when there is too much in the arteries, it is called "inflammation," because it fires up the parts, makes them hot, red, flame-like.

When the veins of a part are too full, there is a dull pain, and the colour is inclined to a black red; when the arteries are too full, there is a fierce, quick, darting pain, and a fiery appearance.

Although the very last part to die, death, in a sense, begins at the heart, by its not being able to relieve itself at a given beat, of all the blood that is in it; the next beat, and there is a greater surplus, and, with that, less power to distribute the vital fluid to the extremities of fingers, feet, and skin; then they begin to grow clammy and cold, and deathlike. But if, almost in the article of death, any great physical or mental shock can be imparted, by which the heart shall bound with a superhuman

throb, and clear itself of its entire contents, life is saved.

The devoted and indefatigable missionary Durfee was dying of low fever, the cold extremities, the fixed eye, the laboured breathing, all showed that the powers of life were rapidly wasting away, although a loud voice would arouse him to consciousness. This suggested to the physician that if the heart could be relieved of its load of blood, if the equilibrium of the circulation could be for a moment restored, he might be saved. He was placed on the floor, and buckets of water were poured upon his body from the height of a man. He seemed to wake up as from a heavy sleep or dream; the circulation was re-established, natural warmth restored, the voice became as clear as in health; he fondled his youngest child, and for a while all seemed hopeful, but nature had lost her recuperative power, had not strength to sustain herself, and he gradually pined away.

Persons have appeared to be dying, when the mustard or blister applied to the wrists and ankles has drawn the blood to those parts, evidenced by their being reddened, thus relieving the heart and saving life. A man sits down to dinner with a severe headache, eats heartily, and feels it no longer. It is because an excess of blood is required in the stomach when it is filled with food; the brain, by furnishing its quota, is relieved of the surplus blood which caused the pain, and the equilibrium is restored. But a hearty meal will not always remove headache, for reasons not necessary now to be explained.

The practical lesson of this article is, they will live the healthiest and the longest, who have the equilibrium of the circulation least interfered with; hence an important means of avoiding sickness and attaining a good old age, is to live quietly, uniformly and regularly; there is no preventive of disease equal to this, and it is well worth while for all to practice it. J. H.

### ART OF COLOURING MARBLE.

DID the ancients practise the art of colouring marble, or is it a recent discovery?

One authority states that, "the art of colouring marble, through the entire mass, is supposed to have been known to the ancients, inasmuch as among the ruins traces of coloured marbles and stones are found," and another thinks there are plausible reasons why some writers have ranked the art of colouring marble amongst the lost arts, because "among the ruins of ancient temples and monuments coloured marbles and stones have been found, of whose original sources no trace can be obtained. If they came from quarries, the quarries are unknown in our day."

In Venice and other cities of Lombardy are columns and altars of a translucent white marble, *marmo statuario*, which resembles the Parian, but is not quite so opaque. The quarries of this kind of marble are as yet unknown. Might it not be said with equally plausible reasons that the Italians knew the art of making this marble, but they lost it?

That analogues and quarries of ancient coloured marbles have not been found, is hardly a sufficient reason for classing the art of colouring marble among "the lost arts," for it may safely be asserted, that all the countries which constituted the ancient world, Egypt, Asia Minor, Greece, Turkey, Italy, Northern Africa, and the Mediterranean Isles, have been in a state of stagnation since the fall of Rome and Constantinople; and that whenever geological and mineralogical surveys are made, the quarries may be rediscovered.

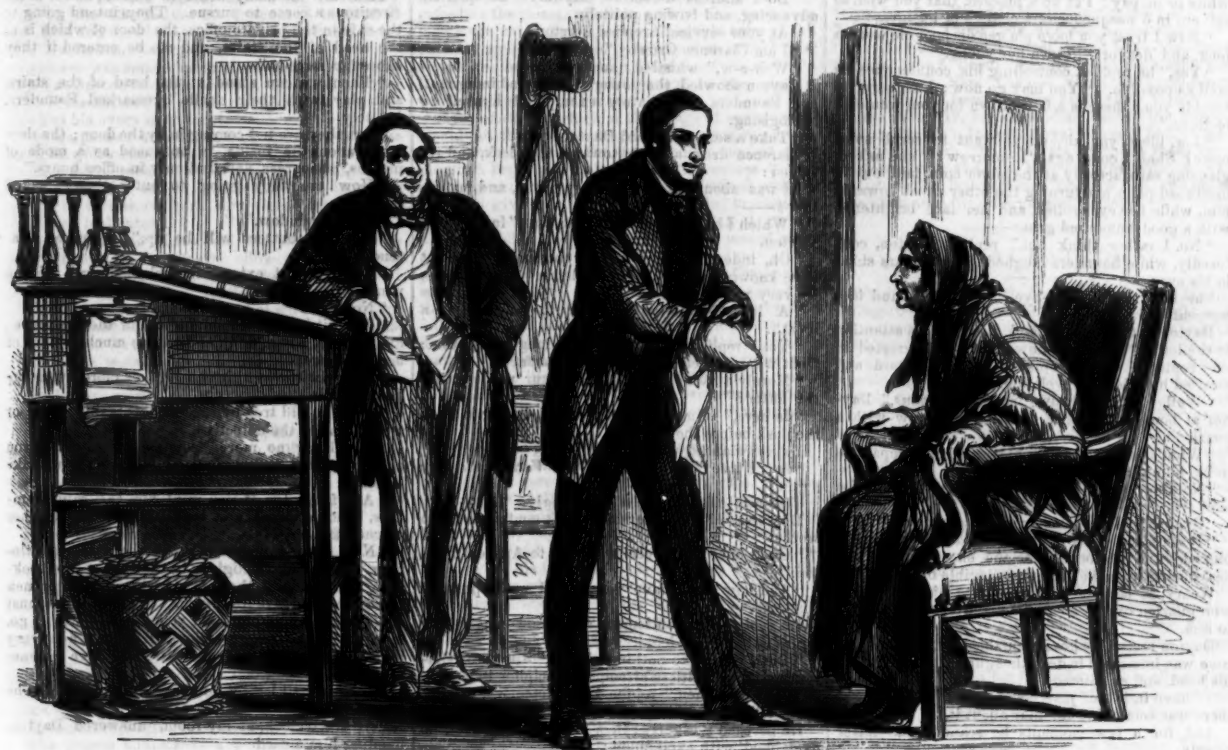
Vitruvius, the ablest Latin writer on ancient architecture, does not allude to the art of colouring marble through the entire mass in his ten books.

Pausanias (A.D. 120) visited Greece, Macedonia, Asia, Egypt, and even Africa, as far as the temple of Jupiter Ammon, then retired to Rome, where he wrote his ten books on the edifices, monuments, and works of art he had examined, and contrasted them with those of Rome. In the work of this author, who is the highest authority on ancient archaeology, there is no allusion to any art of colouring marble through the entire mass; yet this erudite writer not only describes the edifices and works of art, but furnishes historical records, anecdotes, and legends connected with them.

Not even Belzoni (A.D. 1818), describing the vivid colours of his "Room of Beauties," "Researches and Operations in Egypt," p. 227, pretended to assert that the ancients knew the art of colouring marble and granite through the entire mass, though he may have thought they could beautifully colour and stain it on the surface.

Hence, as neither the ediles from B.C. 493 to A.D. 476, a period of one thousand years, neither the ancient painters, sculptors, and architects, nor the ancient writers on archaeology mention the art of colouring marble through the entire mass, we may fairly conclude that the ancients knew nothing of this art, and that it is simply a modern discovery.





[DAYTON'S TEST.]

## FAIRLEIGH; OR, THE BANKER'S SECRET.

### CHAPTER XXXII.

ANDREW DAYTON was well known as a man of superior sagacity, great penetration and acute discrimination. At Scotland Yard he was greatly prized for his gentlemanly bearing, quiet demeanour and matchless shrewdness. To thieves and criminals of all shades his name was a synonym of terror; and in him the innocent found as good a friend as the guilty did a relentless pursuer.

On the morning of which we write he sat in his office, his head resting upon his desk and a smile sauntering both of triumph and perplexity hovering about his mouth.

He was such a man as you would take delight in studying. A very expressive face and regular features. A high, protruding forehead which told of intellect; gray eyes, large and full of fire, which seemed to rest upon everything at once; a nose of the Roman cast, which told of determination; a mouth with small and compact lips, indicative of dogged persistency. A form decidedly muscular and exhibiting great physical strength. In short, a man of commanding presence. A man to be admired and beloved of an honest person; but shunned, feared and avoided by a dishonest one.

For a few moments he sat very still, his eyes wandering around the apartment and his fingers beating a tattoo upon the desk. Then he arose and walked the floor, meantime muttering:

"One man caught—I seem to draw no nearer to the goal of my hopes—years have I laboured, and still the phantom seems to elude me. Truly it seems discouraging; but some time I shall catch him."

As he uttered these words his brow clouded, his lips were compressed and his eyes flashed at the thought; then he continued with more force, which seemed to carry an under-current of significant meaning:

"Then—oh, then will come my triumph! Heavens, will it not be sweet?"

The last word had hardly escaped his lips, ere the door opened, and a short, thickset, pleasant-faced man advanced into the room. Dayton turned as he heard the step, and extending his hand to the newcomer, greeted him shortly:

"How are you, Saunders?"

"First-rate; never better," he replied, throwing himself into a chair. "But how did you succeed?"

"Well, I—"

"There, I beg your pardon, my dear fellow, wait one moment; have a cigar; stories are not worth much without tobacco," and he leaned back in his chair, placed his feet on another, and seemed to enjoy his ease.

Dayton accepted the proffered "weed," ignited it, and between the exhalation of its fragrant vapour, gave his brother officer a condensed account of his arrival at Brookfall and saving Charles Rowe's life.

"Well done. Just like all your exploits; you hit the nail on the head; you bag them right and left, and I have deuced poor luck."

"But I should not have caught him if it had not been for *Verité sans Fear*. Who do you suppose the owner of that signature is? 'It is the strangest affair that I ever knew of. Whoever it is, seems to be informed of everything and kind enough to transmit all the information to me.'"

"I wish I knew," replied Saunders. "It is very curious. At any rate it is to your advantage."

A knock at the office door checked Dayton's reply. "Come in."

The door slowly opened, and an old woman appeared, leaning on a cane; she hobbled towards the desk, and then raising her head, queried in a low, cracked voice:

"Which ob you gemmen is Master Dayton?"

"That is my name," replied Dayton.

"Is that his name, sir," she continued, turning to Saunders.

"Of course it is; what do you mean by doubting his word," replied Saunders, half comically, half seriously.

"I beg the gemman's pardon. But I am trusted wid a very 'portant misshund, and there's so many deceibers about, dat a poor old woman can't be 'spected to trass everybody."

"More truth than poetry, in that remark," said Saunders.

"What is your mission?" said Dayton, kindly.

"Here sir, I much 'bliged to you sir," and she placed a letter in his hand.

He glanced at it, at the same time remarking to Saunders:

"You are snubbed, young man; you don't find much favour with the fair sex."

Saunders' only reply was a hearty laugh.

Dayton opened his letter, and glanced at the signature; 'twas "*Verité sans Fear*."

"Here, here, come back," he cried, jumping to his feet, and addressing the woman, who had toddled almost to the door.

"Sit down," he said.

She lowered herself very gradually into a chair, and then said:

"Well, sir, what do you want of me?"

"Where did you get this letter?"

"I got it from a boy, who gave me sixpence for bringing it here."

"Where is the boy?"

"I do not know, sir, he run away just as soon as he gave it to me."

"Where did he get it?"

"He told me a blind man gave it to him."

"Is that all you know about it?"

"Yes, sir."

"You may go," mumbled Dayton, very reluctantly, who imagined that he had a clue. Then he thought a moment, and again started up, exclaiming: "Stop! stop! come back here."

She halted, and turned towards him.

"The missive you have brought me has great interest. I won't detain you long."

"Yes sir," and she seated herself, and awaited his motion.

Dayton rapped the desk a moment, and then with a queer smile playing upon his features, crossed the room, and entered a closet, and in a moment issued therefrom with a wet towel in his hand.

Saunders looked very much as if he would like to laugh very loud, but he repressed his inclination, and quietly watched the progress of affairs.

Dayton stopped directly in front of the old woman, who had been grinning rather perplexedly, and said:

"My good woman, I am a detective, and I am obliged to examine every person that I suspect."

"Bless your soul, do you 'spect a poor old woman like me? dear, dear, I knowed I should get into trouble."

"Do not be frightened; I shall not hurt you, or keep you here more than five minutes. You will allow me to apply this towel to your face; I wish to see whether you are really old, or manufactured for the occasion."

She opened her eyes very wide, and stared at him in a most comical, though half frightened manner.

Dayton applied the towel to her face, and rubbed with force enough to have left a smooth spot had it been artificial, but it rather looked more natural; the water probably had a sanitary effect.

Saunders could smother his laughter no longer; he had a natural taste for humour, and the sight of a tall muscular man bending over a shrivelled old woman, and trying to rub her wrinkles out, was a scene to bring tears of laughter to the gravest of the grave; and Saunders literally roared, ejaculating in the midst of his laughter:

"Goit Dayton! Africans experimented on! Turned

white or no pay! Put up a placard, that you wish to sell out in consequence of a change of business!"

"Now I trust you have played the poor old woman long, and 'deavor'd to turn her young."

"Yes," he replied, controlling his countenance as well as possible. "You may go now; I am sorry to trouble you; there is a half-crown for your wounded feelings."

"Lor, bless you sir, do ye want to scrub some more? Shall I come again to-morrow?" she asked, glancing satisfactorily at the silver coin, laid out in her broad palm, and turning the other cheek towards him, while her eyes rolled, and her face brightened with a good-humoured grin.

"No, I rather think not," replied Dayton, confusedly, while Saunders laughed till the tears stood in his eyes.

She had them good-bye very kindly, and in a moment had disappeared.

Dayton seated himself and directed his attention to the letter. Saunders now quiet and interested in the contents of the epistle, leaned forward and awaited his friend's revelation.

"Well, well, this grows more mysterious," Dayton at length remarked, knitting his brow with a puzzled air.

"What's in the wind now?" queried his companion, in his blunt, jovial fashion.

"Nothing, only there is too much cypher here for me."

"Cypher? Jove! this grows interesting."

"It does, so very interesting that I am getting perplexed," and he bent over the sheet, vainly endeavouring to make something legible of it.

Wearily at last, he resigned it to his companion, who puzzled over it some time, and then returned it to him.

Dayton rested his head upon the desk, and for some time was immersed in deep thought. Then he raised his head, and exclaimed:

"I have it, it has just come to me! I thought there was something familiar about it."

And for a few moments he scanned the letter closely.

The letter was a curious epistle, and for the benefit of the reader we transcribe it:

"25-26-13-16-18-13-20. 19-12-6-8-22. 9-12-25-22-23. 18-8. 7-12. 25-22. 9-26-15-11-19. 12-20-23-22-13-8. 7-12. 18-18-23-19-7. 26-7. 7-4-22-15-5-22. 24-12-6-9-7. 22-13-7-9-26-13-24-22. 12-13. 25-22. 19-26-13-23."

VERITE SANS PEUR."

"Well," mused Saunders, looking over his friend's shoulder, "if you can make any sense out of that conglomerate mass of figures, I shall have to accredit you with new penetration."

"Not so conglomerate as you imagine; but very plain. I remember having had occasion to read cyphers before. You see, Saunders, those are all figures and—"

"That I perceive plain enough," interrupted the irrepressible fellow.

"Those figures," continued Dayton, not heeding the interruption, "must represent letters; you notice there is no number above twenty-six; exactly the number of letters in the alphabet."

"Ah, it grows clearer," mused Saunders. "But we are no wiser now than we were before; 'z' is the last letter, and number twenty-six of the alphabet; that does not make sense. It's all a muddle," added Saunders, his enthusiasm dying out.

"Not so fast; suppose we transpose the numbers, and make 'a' instead of 'z' number twenty-six, what then?"

"By George, Dayton, you've hit it."

"I think I have; take for instance the first period of letters, and you will find it gives the word 'banking.'"

"Capital! capital, old fellow, you are progressing swimmingly," shouted the jolly Saunders.

After some half-hour's labour, during which time his companion looked over his shoulder, Dayton announced his task finished, and read as his solution of the problem the following startling communication: "Edgar Ormsby's banking-house is to be robbed to-night at twelve—court entrance—be at hand."

VERITE SANS PEUR."

"Ah, that is news! By Jove, Dayton, we'll bag some of those coves to-night, if that is to be relied on."

"And it is; you know it has before been tested; it is true. But who is our informant, who seems to know all the villains in London, and keeps us posted? There is the question that agitates my mind."

"We shall know sometime. Whoever it is, the communication is of immense value to us, and the killing of the game is attended with more danger than running it down."

"True, true, and it applies here, but—"

At this point the door again opened, and a young man entered.

"Do I address detective Dayton?" he queried, advancing, and bowing politely.

"At your service," replied Dayton.

"I am Clarence Ormsby."

"W-h-e-w," whistled Saunders.

Dayton scowled, the young man looked indignant, and Saunders immediately excused himself by apologising.

"Take a seat, sir," said Dayton.

Clarence drew a chair towards the desk, and resumed:

"I was about to give you my name, and my father's—"

"Which I have known for a long time," interrupted Dayton.

"Oh, indeed! That is your business. I might have known it. But I have a letter which puzzles me very much—"

"A letter?" interposed both the officers in a breath.

"Yes," replied Clarence, with a long respiration; "but what is there so strange in that fact?"

"Merely a coincidence. I beg your pardon, but the letter?"

"Is here," returned our old friend, laying it upon the desk before them.

Dayton glanced at the signature.

"As I live!" he exclaimed. "Verite sans peur again!"

Clarence looked at them inquiringly.

Dayton read the letter aloud. It contained these words:

"Go at once upon receipt of this to Andrew Dayton."

"And now what have you to tell me?" pursued Clarence.

In reply, the gentleman addressed placed the figure letter in his hand.

"But I can make nothing of this," answered Clarence, after a fruitless attempt to decipher it.

"Try that then," rejoined the detective, placing the written translation of it before him.

He perused it eagerly; then leaping to his feet, he exclaimed, with excitement:

"A plot—but it shall be counterplotted."

"You're right," remarked Saunders, with one of his comical grins.

At this a thought of the imp crossed Clarence's mind, and he turned pale and sank into his chair.

"Are you ill?" Dayton anxiously queried.

"Oh, no, not at all; I have just recovered from a fit of sickness, and am apt to faint. I am all right now," he added, passing his hand across his brow.

"So it seems that you, as well as myself, are watched over by that mystical personage known only as Verite sans Peur, or 'Truth without Fear,'" remarked Dayton, addressing Clarence.

"Yes, and I should like to see him again."

"Again! Have you ever seen him?" Dayton hurriedly asked.

"Yes, I saw him once. A slender, lily-faced, blonde-moustached youth—very effeminate in voice as well as looks."

"Are you sure? Will you tell me the circumstances?"

Clarence related to them the incident, and both appeared to be much interested. As he finished, Saunders remarked:

"We are moving slowly, Dayton, but we shall conquer ultimately."

"I hope so," was the sincere rejoinder. After a moment's pause, he resumed: "But our plans must be developed for the coming night's work."

"In which I wish to bear a hand," interposed Clarence.

"A strange request, young sir; do you count the chance of losing your life?"

"I do; I am willing to take the risk."

"Better stay at home," volunteered Saunders.

"I should advise you as a friend to keep away," added Dayton.

"And I desire to know if you will grant me the privilege of going?" persisted Clarence.

"If you go, you go at your own risk," replied Dayton.

"It is settled, then," observed Clarence; "but is it not better to keep the knowledge from my father?"

"Yes," answered Dayton, "it might excite and weaken him. He is not strong enough yet."

"I see you are well informed, that is the reason I make an interrogatory of my remark."

"Now for our plans," said Dayton. "The alley runs directly in the rear of the banking-house. The entrance is some way into the court; a small iron door leads to the bank, and from thence a pair of stairs takes us to the main office, then we cross the room, enter the desk door, from thence into another room, and we are at the bank vaults."

"Which they will attempt to rob," suggested Clarence.

"In that you are mistaken," returned Dayton.

"There are too many doors to unlock, and it is too circuitous a route to pursue. They intend going to the safe in the private office, the door of which is at the head of the stairs, and can be entered if they choose to force it."

"Then we can stand at the head of the stairs, and play with their skulls," remarked Saunders, jeocosely.

"But they are not coming in by the door; the door looks upon the inside, is not used as a mode of ingress, but egress, and that only in office hours."

"How are they going to enter then?" asked Saunders.

"By the window."

"But the shutters will be up," interposed Clarence.

"They do not extend the whole length of the window."

"No."

"Then it is so much the better for their purpose; for they can enter, and not stand so much chance of being followed."

"The window is thirteen feet, or more, from the ground," objected Clarence.

"And the old tree by the window is thirty feet or more," smiled the detective.

"I will say no more," rejoined Clarence; "you checkmate my propositions as fast as I can make them."

"And faster too, if you want him to," said Saunders, who admired and took pride in his brother officer's tact.

"Now let me consider," said the latter gentleman. "My place is slightly in the rear of the book-case, at the side of the safe. I will place three men in different parts of the room. You, Saunders, must cover up their retreat, and you, sir, if you will go, must act with him. I believe all that is necessary to the success of our expedition, I have enumerated."

"Where shall I meet you?" asked Clarence, as he arose to depart.

"At six o'clock, at my room," answered Dayton, handing him a card.

"At six?"

"Exactly," answered Saunders, good humouredly, and Clarence passed out.

All the rest of the day, Dayton was busy upon the night's campaign. He was playing for a great stake, as could be plainly seen by the interest that he evinced in everything appertaining to it.

Should he meet him face to face? Oh, how fondly he hoped so!

## CHAPTER XXXIII.

At the appointed time, Clarence presented himself at the detective's rooms, where he found both the officers.

"Do you feel nervous, sir, in view of your prospective adventure?" asked Saunders, in a provoking tone.

"He is not of a stock to experience any such sensations," returned Dayton, before the gentleman addressed had an opportunity to reply.

"You seem to know my family well, or you would not speak with so much assurance," remarked Clarence.

"I do," was the short rejoinder, and, after a moment's pause, he added: "You will have to change your garb, Mr. Ormsby; it will not do to be seen in your proper person while engaged in this business."

"Who will see me? It is nothing new for me to enter the bank at this hour."

"Very true; but those who are about to perpetrate this crime have spies placed in the vicinity of the bank, and should you be seen going in, it might raise their suspicions, and perhaps defer the event."

"How are we three to enter, if such is the case?"

"You will have that explained ere long. Now, if you will please to enter this room," throwing open the door as he spoke, "and array yourself in the clothes which you will find upon rail number five, you will be ready for the expedition."

Clarence entered. In a short time he issued therefrom—a complete metamorphosis having taken place in his appearance. Instead of the glossy black broadcloth, he wore a suit of rough gray. A pair of bushy side-whiskers and moustache covered the greater portion of his face; his wavy light hair was carefully concealed under a massive black wig; and, in the person that stood before the two men, it would have been very difficult to find one feature or inch of apparel that at all resembled Clarence Ormsby.

The two officers nodded approvingly, and then, leaving Clarence to his reflections, they entered the apartment he had just vacated, and proceeded to don suits which should effectually disguise their real character.

Presently they returned, and Dayton having asked



Clarence if he was armed, and having received a reply in the affirmative, he announced himself in readiness and the three passed out, and after a brisk walk reached the bank.

Clarence was somewhat anxious with regard to the row that Dayton intended to adopt to conceal or cover their entrance, and as they ascended the steps he watched his every movement.

Dayton paused a moment, and then rapped three times in quick succession, followed a moment after by two more, each at about an interval of thirty seconds; at the end of which time the door was opened by an unseen hand, and closed immediately after they had entered.

Clarence looked about him, and saw that there were six men in the general office besides himself and his two companions. He looked to Dayton for an explanation, but that gentleman volunteered no answer to his mute appeal; and not wishing to be inquisitive, Clarence awaited the progress of events. One fact that struck him as being peculiar, was that two of them were dressed in exactly the same manner as himself and his two companions.

While thus cogitating, Dayton turned towards him and said:

"Please go in the private office, Mr. Ormsby, and change your apparel for some you will find there."

Wondering what the necessity of this new move was, Clarence mutely obeyed, and in a few moments returned looking like himself again. His first remark when he joined Dayton was:

"You seem to work by magic power. I find the clothes that I left in your rooms a short time ago in the private office: how did you get them here?"

Dayton smiled. "You are not yet acquainted with the thousand and one subterfuges that we have to employ, while battling with these experienced and crafty rascals. A thing that would seem to be of little or no consequence might turn the tide of an exploit, and cause its failure. Jackson," he continued, addressing one of the men with regard to whom Clarence had been puzzled, "enter the office, and put on in the articles this gentleman has just thrown off."

The person addressed—a young man, and very near the size of Clarence—did as directed, and in a few moments returned.

Clarence started as he saw the change that had been wrought in the young man's appearance. He was the exact counterpart of himself, as he had appeared a short time before.

"Poole and Woodward, step forward, please," said Dayton.

The two men, whom Clarence had mentally remarked upon as having resembled his new friends in the matter of clothes, responded to the call, and Dayton, placing his hand in an inside pocket, drew therefrom a pair of whiskers exactly like his own, and a moustache of the same size and colour as that worn by Saunders.

These the two men assumed, and being joined by the young man Jackson, the three stood opposite to Dayton, Saunders and Clarence.

Dayton cast his eyes upon Clarence, who looked at himself as he was, and then at his exact counterpart opposite to him, then at the two Dayton's, and lastly at Saunders. He was pleased, yet surprised; he admired, yet wondered.

"Well, Mr. Ormsby, what is your opinion now?" asked Dayton.

"I have nothing to say—your adroitness surpasses my comprehension."

"There, that will do," said Dayton, addressing the three; "now you may leave us."

"I say, be careful," interposed Saunders, who would not let an opportunity escape to crack a joke; "be careful, I say, that you leave the genuine Dayton and Co. behind, for I'm hanged if I know whether you are Saunders or I am. And Poole, look out for creditors, for they will collar you as sure as you are alive."

A laugh was the only response, and the three men passed out.

"We have some time to wait," said Dayton.

"Yes, but we can relieve the monotony a little," answered Clarence.

"How?" queried Saunders.

"Why, there is a closet in the private office, large enough for us to sit in; there is gas, and we can play cards and smoke the time away until the moment for action arrives."

"That's it; you are of the right stamp," observed Saunders, approvingly.

"But there is not a window that the light will reflect from?" queried Dayton, with his usual caution.

"It is solid wall," replied Clarence; "there is no fear of that." He stopped a moment, and added, perplexedly, "But the other three men, where will they turn?"

"In the general office, until I call them," answered Dayton.

After giving his instruction to the three men in

the general office, Dayton and his companions repaired to the closet, where in a short time they were busy over cards and cigars. Although calm to all outward appearance, and wearing that stoical look which was habitual to him, Dayton could not help feeling some anxiety with regard to the conflict, which he knew would occur.

Many emotions, which at this stage of our story he would not thank us to describe, filled his mind and caused him to regard the approaching combat with pleasure, hope, and pain; pleasure, because it was his element; hope, because he had an issue at stake—it would give him new laurels; pain, because he knew blood would be shed; and to a man of his refined sensibility, the latter circumstance was of great consideration.

He regretted now that he had allowed Clarence to come. He thought as he looked at him seated at the opposite side of the table, his brown wavy hair falling around his intellectual brow, his blue eyes flashing merrily, and his whole face alive with animation—perhaps, ere the sun shall rise, that eye will be dim, those illumined features stern—set in death. Then his eyes rested upon fat, jolly, careless Saunders, and the same reflections held a place in his mind with regard to him.

Dayton was peculiar; he was a man of great affection, and very susceptible to the sorrow of others; his stoicism served to parry his own case. Hence his thoughts of Clarence and his jolly companion. All the time his mind was occupied with regard to them, he was busily engaged in the game, a quiet smile playing around his well-defined features, and apparently all his interests centred in the cards. Another quality which the reader will at once perceive, he did not allow his feelings to speak through his expression, voice or action; you could tell his thoughts by his face no more than you could tell the contents of a book by its cover.

Clarence, although seemingly enjoying the game, could not help reflecting upon the intricate and perplexing chain of circumstances which seemed to bear directly upon his own fate and that of his family, at the same time mysteriously linked with that of Luke's.

These thoughts, as the reader will at once assume, did not tend to enliven him, but on the contrary served to make him a little nervous, and to wish the time away, that he might know if this, too, was another of the wicked plots of the weakened-up imp; for in Clarence's mind the events which we have related, and in which he played so prominent a part with Luke, or his agents, for his aggressor or aggressors, could not fail to give him the impression that all his troubles might with justice be imputed to Luke. Then the question would arise: "Why should it be so?" From which he invariably turned away with a sigh, that he might not brood over an interrogatory that could not be answered.

Saunders, careless, happy fellow, was not troubled with any such thoughts as troubled the minds of his two companions. Wounds he never thought of till they came, and then, as he often expressed it in his careless way:

"I wish to part company with them as soon as possible."

With all his apparent listlessness and careless mirthfulness, Adolphus Saunders was an efficient, vigilant, cautious officer. In a conflict he always distinguished himself, and from this fact, taken in connection with his jovial nature, he was honoured with a sobriquet, somewhat anomalous, it is true, but very appropriate—"Jolly Tiger." He cared nothing for this, but invariably replied, when his companions sought to torment him about his name, that: "He did not care what they called him, as long as they did not call him too late for his pay."

Nine o'clock struck, and still the three played on, though Dayton and Clarence were thinking as little of the game as they were of the "Czar of Russia." Ten o'clock passed—how slowly the hours seemed to go! At eleven Dayton lighted a fresh cigar, and perforce turned his attention to the cards. A short time after he glanced at his watch.

"Twenty minutes to twelve," he said, in a startled whisper. "Clarence, put out that gas."

Immediately the flame was extinguished, and the three were in darkness. It was a good opportunity for Saunders's wit, but he possessed that blessed quality of knowing when to hold his tongue. The closing in of the darkness was the signal for him to turn the jester into the quick, determined officer, and he did so with a rapidity which would have done credit to a harlequin.

(To be continued.)

YACHTING FIXTURES FOR 1899.—The following are the present fixtures of the principal metropolitan yachting clubs for the forthcoming season: May 8, Royal London Yacht Club, opening cruise; May 15, New Thames Yacht Club, opening cruise; May 21,

Royal London Yacht Club, first match; May 22, Royal Thames Yacht Club, opening cruise; May 23, New Thames Yacht Club, first and second class cutters; May 24, Royal Thames Yacht Club, first-class cutters; June 6, Royal Thames Yacht Club, schooner race; June 7, New Thames Yacht Club, schooner race; June 19, New Thames Yacht Club, third-class cutters; June 19, Royal London Yacht Club, schooners and yawls; June 21, Royal Thames Yacht Club, Channel match. The courses in these races vary between Erith and the Mouse Light, with the exception of the last named. There will be the usual time allowance for difference of tonnage.

## THE ALBATROSS.

WHAT a pleasant little home it was! The family sitting-room had never before looked so bright and attractive as on that autumn afternoon. A cheerful fire blazed on the hearthstone; the crimson curtains were closely drawn, filling the room with a warm, roseate light, and in the midst of this, in her low sewing-chair, sat the young wife, a dainty bit of embroidery in her lap, at which she worked away with deft fingers, humming all the while a gentle lullaby to the little sleeper in the wicker cradle at her side. On the rug, at her feet, lay a little girl, her first-born, worn out with play, her curly head pillowed on a great shaggy Newfoundland, and both fast asleep.

Richard Standish, the husband and father, stood noiselessly on the threshold, contemplating this pretty home-picture with a full heart. After a few moments he made a step into the room. His wife looked up quickly, her eyes brightening with pleasure.

"Oh, Dick! Is it you?" she said; "how glad I am. I was so afraid you'd be detained late. Come in, I want—"

But something in his face silenced her all at once, and she sat looking up at him with tender, entreating eyes. He spoke at last, his voice hoarse and unsteady.

"The Albatross sails to-morrow morning, Violet," he said.

A silence fell between them, broken at last by her passionate inquiry:

"But, Dick, is there no help? Must you—must you go?"

"I must, Violet!"

She said no more, knowing that his decision was inexorable. Once before, since their marriage, he had gone, leaving her for a whole dreary year—and now he was going again. The embroidery fell from her fingers, and she sat gazing into the red coals, while the babies slept at her feet, thinking of the desolate hours in store for her and them. Her husband watched her with a swelling heart. After a while he approached her, and stroking her bright rippling hair, said tenderly:

"Poor Violet, poor little wife, you mustn't take it so hard."

She made no answer, but throwing her arms round his neck, sobbed for a few moments on his bosom; and then she was ready for her work, and there was plenty to do. Clothing to overlook, socks to darn, besides all the packing. The whole night long she was at it, and in the chill, drear dawn, pale and weary, but with wide, sleepless eyes, she followed him down to the wharf. The Albatross swung at anchor, all ready for her departure.

He had kissed the babies as they lay asleep in their little cot-bed, and now he turned to his wife.

"Good-bye, Violet," he said, his bronzed features working with the emotion he struggled to keep down. "I may as well say it at once, as it's got to be done; take care of yourself and the babies, and don't worry about me; a year will soon slip by, and then I'll be back again, God willing. Kiss me, and run home like a good little wife; you're shivering with the cold now."

She kissed him, clinging to his bosom for a moment, and then she hurried away. But on the top of the hill she paused to look back. She could not discern his face or figure in the crowd of busy men that thronged the decks, yet she gazed through the darkness with yearning, wistful eyes, until the moment of departure came; and amid cheers and shouts, and booming guns, the Albatross started on her long voyage, her white sails looking like great wings in the uncertain morning light.

Then she hurried homeward, the babies would be waking and need her care. But what a weary, aching heart she carried in her bosom. All at once the aim and interest of her life seemed to have died out—the very world had changed. The red dawn-drears, just kindling in the far east, wore a garish, sickly light; the early matins of the birds sounded harsh and discordant; and her home, hitherto so pretty and attractive in her eyes, looked forlorn and desolate. But Violet was a brave little woman, despite her

childish face and rippling hair; and although heart and hands were alike nerveless, she went resolutely to work, and after a time she worked herself into a genial, hopeful humour. For these simple, homely tasks, that make up our life drudgery, are often the saving of our souls; this ceaseless labour, from which we flinch at times, is the one sovereign remedy, the universal panacea for human ills and woes.

The glory of autumn faded, and winter came. The snows fell white and deep round the sailor's little cottage, and through the dreary, weary nights the patient mother worked and watched her babies. Little Annie, the eldest born, could remember her father, and over and over again she would ask:

"Mother, when will father come home from over the big sea?"

And the mother would answer, her blue eyes brightening at the thought:

"When summer time comes, darling, and the golden pippins get ripe, then father will come home."

And the winter went by at last, and spring came, bringing the bloom of primroses, and the odour of violets, and the golden pippin tree was one mass of fragrant blossoms. Little Annie watched them, and led her baby brother beneath their rustling shadow, telling him of the coming day when father would come home. Almost a year had gone by, and in all this long, long time only one letter had come. Midshipman Standish found but few opportunities to send letters; but this one sufficed. He was well, and the Albatross would soon be homeward bound—he would be at home in autumn.

And autumn came; the trees put on the livery of royal purple, the hills their russet gold. Violet Standish went about her work, from day to day, with an indescribable beauty in her face. She seemed to have grown young again; all the cares and troubles of life dropped off like a mantle, leaving her clothed in the radiant garments of hope and love—the fair, fresh, winsome girl that Dick Standish had wooed and won amid the clover bloom of her country home, five years before. The little children wandered about in the yellow sunlight, dyeing their fingers with berries, and peeping into the tiny homes of the robins; and one sunny morning both came rushing in, all aglow with excitement:

"Mother, mother!" cried Annie, her little pinafore filled with golden fruit, "see here! the golden pippins are ripe. Will father come home to-day?"

Violet's heart gave a great leap of gladness. She looked out at the blue sky, the floating, fleecy clouds, and mist-crowned hills, with something like a prophecy at her heart:

"I think he will, darling!" she replied; "we will make ready for him, anyway. Go gather all you can."

And the children toddled off again, the little sturdy boy looking so like his father, that his mother ran after him and covered his brown face with kisses. Then she hurried back and fell to work. She cleaned the cottage till a speck of dust could nowhere be found, put fresh flowers in the windows—and then she went to cooking. Every delicacy, for which he had ever expressed a fancy, was prepared; and as the sun was going down, dressed in her prettiest gown, she sat down to wait.

"Will father come to-night, mother?" asked Annie, stealing up in the twilight.

"If not to-night, he will come to-morrow, love?"

To-morrow came, the golden pippins hung ripening on the tree; the grain waved in yellow sheaves around the cottage-door. The year had rounded—why did not the wanderer come? The children wandered about restlessly, followed by faithful old Leo; and after noon, growing impatient and anxious, Violet went down to the post-office. Perchance there might be a letter, or some tidings from the Albatross.

A crowd of men surrounded the door, evidently in eager discussion, but they made way for her deferentially. There was no letter, and no tidings from the Albatross. The postmaster hesitated and looked at her with pitying eyes—so did the bystanders. Something in their faces struck her.

"What is it?" she questioned, looking from one to another.

Then, an awful fear thrilling through her, she snatched a paper they had been reading. There it was in flaming characters!

"Losses at sea! The Albatross, due at this port on the nineteenth instant, took fire on the Indian Ocean, and every soul on board was lost!"

She tottered homeward through the glory of the autumn evening, clutching the paper in her hand. The children met her at the gate.

"What is it, mother?" questioned Annie, looking up affrighted at her sad, pale face. "Won't father come home?"

"No, no!" she wailed in answer. "He will never come home any more—never any more!"

The autumn passed again, and winter followed,

with dreary nights of storm and darkness. But Violet Standish lived and worked, for the mother-love in her bosom was strong. Spring came, with its beauty and promise, the pomp and pageantry of another summer, and autumn again. The golden pippins ripened, and Annie and her little brother gathered them in with a nameless awe in their young faces. Winter again, and Christmas Eve. The snow piled in great drifts round the little cottage; the air keen and biting; the stars out in countless thousands. The mother and her little ones gathered in their faggots, and threw a heavy log upon the fire; and Leo stretched his huge length before the blaze. Then they sat down to their work, for work was becoming a necessity in these latter days; and even little Annie's tiny fingers did their part. The sturdy little boy, growing more and more like his dead father, cracked nuts, and shot straws at Leo, and finally became weary, and betook himself to his trundle-bed.

"What'll Kriss-Kringle bring me, mother?" he asked, popping up his curly head.

His mother glanced across at his chubby stockings suspended against the wall, and her eyes filled with tears. Her store of Christmas gifts was very scanty, yet she answered pleasantly:

"Something nice, perhaps, darling, if you'll go to sleep like a good boy."

Annie worked until her blue eyes grew heavy; and she followed her brother to the little bed, but not to sleep—she lay awake listening to the voice of the wind. It was a terrible night, cold and windy, and the distant boom of the sea was incessant. Her mother trimmed the lamp, and continued her sewing.

"Don't work any more, mother," said the child. "Come to bed, please—I'm so lonesome."

"But I must finish this garment to-night, love. We shall need more coal on Monday; and there's no money till this is paid for. Go to sleep, there's a darling; you're not lonesome with mother so near."

But the child still remained awake, her blue eyes full of solemn inquiry.

"Mother," she began again, after a pause, "how nice it is to have a father. Lizzie Green is so happy. I think; her father takes her everywhere, and gets her such nice things. I wish my father had lived. Do you think, mother, he can see how lonesome we are?"

The poor, pale-faced woman put out her hand as if the child's prattle tortured her.

"My darling, yes; he knows about us, and sees us, I think," she replied, speaking with an effort. "But go to sleep now; mother is too tired to talk."

"Yes, mother; only let me tell you what I've been thinking. What if the Lord should let Kriss-Kringle bring father home to-night—wouldn't it be nice, mother?"

"Yes, love; but that cannot be. Father cannot come to us; but we shall go to him by-and-bye."

Annie fell into silence, and the night waned away. The stars burned, and the wind moaned, and the great sea thundered. Violet worked on steadily. She was a brave, strong woman, and kept her sorrow beneath her feet; but it rose up strong and fierce to-night. Old memories of her happy girlhood came trooping back, fond words, loving smiles, tender caresses. Her tried soul was full to overflowing. How should she ever bear the burden of life through another year? It was so hard, she should faint in the endeavour, but for her children's sake. Glancing over at the little couch, and the pair of curly heads, she resumed her needle with fresh vigour. The hours wore on; Christmas morn would soon be dawning—Christmas with its peace on earth, and its promise of gladness to all men. What would it bring to her?

The winds rose, driving the light snow against the windows. Leo put up his ears and listened, then he arose and trotted off to the door. Presently he began to whine plaintively.

"What is it, Leo?" asked his mistress.

The dog came to her side, looking up in her face with an intelligence that seemed almost human; then he went back to the door, pawing and whining. Violet put down her work and went to the window. As the wind lulled, she caught the sound of a step, a firm, quick step, crunching the frozen snow. The dog leaped to the window, barking and whining, and showing every manifestation of joy. The step came nearer and nearer. A wild terror filled the lonely woman's heart. What danger threatened her children? She glanced towards the little bed, and there sat Annie, in her white night-robe, her hands clasped, her sweet, spiritual face fairly radiant with joy.

"Oh! mother, mother!" she cried, "don't you know, don't you feel it—it is father coming home?"

A wild thrill shot through the poor wife's heart, terror, doubt, all commingled; her limbs trembled,

and she grew faint; but as the step came nearer and nearer, obeying an impulse stronger than her will, or her fear, she opened the door. A brawny, broad-shouldered man, in a sailor's garb. One instant she gazed on him, and then she clasped him in her arms with a wild cry.

"Oh! it is—it is my husband! Oh, Dick! you are not dead? Heaven has sent you back to me again?"

"Yes, Violet," he replied, his hot tears raining on her cheeks, "from the very jaws of death He has sent me back to you."

She held him close for a moment, and then the mother-love began to stir in her heart. She turned and pointed to the little bed. The sturdy, little boy was sound asleep; but Annie was awaiting him with wide, bright eyes.

"I knew it, father, and I told mother so," she whispered, as she clasped his neck. "I knew that God would let Kriss-Kringle bring you home to-night."

And Christmas morning dawned, bringing a renewal of the promise of peace on earth to all the world, and to the sailor's home a joy unspeakable and full of glory.

E. G. J.

## ADELICIA.

BY THE

Author of "The Beauty of Paris," "Wild Redburn," &c.

### CHAPTER XXIX.

JEROME CAREW, after parting with Lord Charles and Adelia Louvaine, retraced his steps in hope of meeting Sir Otto Dare, whom he believed would be swift and sure in his pursuit, the prize being too great to be readily resigned.

He was not surprised, therefore, when he arrived at the farmhouse where he had administered the sleeping potion to Andrew and his companions, to find the Turkish ambassador and his party upon the point of renewing the pursuit. Carew rode up to the gate as Sir Otto and those with him advanced from the farmhouse, several bearing torches, as the night was dark.

The surgeon met them boldly, and was at once recognised by Sir Blaize, who exclaimed, in great surprise:

"What! Dr. Carew! Where is Lord Charles?" "Ho! Is this man one of those who went with Lord Charles Gray and the maiden?" demanded Sir Otto, quickly. "Here—advance one of those torches, that I may look closely at him. Do you know him, Sir Blaize?"

"Know him? Of course I know him. He is Dr. Jerome Carew, secretary of Lord Charles Gray."

"No longer so, Sir Blaize," interrupted Carew. "I am discharged. Lord Charles bade me begone, as he needed me no more. Such is my reward for all my services."

"Carew? Jerome Carew? I think I knew you years ago," said Sir Otto, gazing upon the thin, pale face of the surgeon.

"Yes, we once knew each other very well, Sir Otto Dare."

"So—I remember now," continued Sir Otto Dare. "We may be friends and allies again, I suppose."

"I am ready to serve your excellency in all things. I would be glad to enter your service, since I have been thrust forth upon the world by Lord Charles."

"No matter for that, Carew. I willingly take you into my service," said Sir Otto. "You may at once begin your usefulness by placing us upon the track of Lord Charles. The maiden, Adelia Louvaine, was with him?"

"She was, and is, no doubt. I must have a fresh horse, however, or I must remain behind. Lord Charles is on his way to Dumfries with the maiden."

"You shall go with us. Some of you see that another horse is provided for this man instantly," commanded Sir Otto, who now felt confident of being able to overtake the fugitives long before they could reach the Scottish border; and thus did the wily Jerome Carew attach himself to Sir Otto's train, with no other object in view than to gain possession of the contents of the casket. It was not his intention to guide Sir Otto to the capture of Adelia Louvaine, and he was careful to let fall no word from which it could be supposed that Lord Charles had any design to conduct her to Trenthamdale Castle. He believed that a few hours, or at most a few days, would see him master of the proofs of Adelia's royal descent.

It was not until the following morning that he became aware that the veiled lady who rode with the party, and of whose presence he had taken no notice during the night ride, was Molina Mandstone. He was a little startled at first, for he could not divine why she was in the train of Sir Otto, but after a moment's reflection, and considering the presence of Sir



Blaise, he concluded that the latter had met her and insisted upon her attendance. As he was aware that Molina Maudstone had been married to Lord Charles Gray, he imagined Sir Blaise and she had resolved to take hasty steps to prevent the young lord from being entangled in an intrigue which might end in his being slain by the indignant Sir Bertram.

He had no suspicion of the truth, that Sir Blaise and his ambitious daughter had discovered that Lord Charles was not the heir of the dukedom of Trethamdale, for he had no suspicion that Duke Lewis was not the rightful duke. He noticed, for he was acutely observant, that Molina conversed gaily and intimately with Sir Otto, but he did not suspect that she had a desire to obtain the same casket he was so eager to possess.

Omrath had assured her that the packet contained nothing which had the slightest reference to Sir Bertram's father, nor to anything regarding the dukes of Trethamdale, but simply and solely proofs of the royal descent of Adelia Louvaine. Of this she was not satisfied, however, being of too suspicious a nature to rely upon the word of anyone, unindorsed by the evidence of her own eyes.

All that day they journeyed on rapidly towards the Scottish border, under the guidance of Jerome Carew, and after nightfall they halted at an inn to snatch a few hours' repose.

"I distrust that man," had been whispered to Omrath by Molina. "He is shrewd and dangerous. He has joined Sir Otto for no revealed purpose. He has dared make insulting offers to me—not to-day, but weeks ago. He will injure me, if he can. He was a witness of my marriage to Lord Charles. I suspect that Adelia Louvaine is the unknown lady whom Duke Lewis desires shall become the wife of his son; that Duke Lewis and Lord Charles are both aware of her royal descent and long concealed claims. Carew is doubtless their agent to procure the proofs of her birth, and all claims which they may desire to make. Take care, or he may steal the packet from Sir Otto before you attempt it. Watch him, and be before him in that matter. As I am sure that Lord Charles will never be Duke of Trethamdale, for Sir Bertram's rights will be demanded after the death of Master Stepmore, if not before; and as I despise Lord Charles as a man, and especially as I fear I could never prove myself to be his legitimate wife—I know I cannot, if Carew refuses to testify in my favour—Maybold really not being certain that the man who married us was a priest; and as I sometimes suspect that my father has deceived me in saying that the marriage was legal; and as Lord Charles himself may have seen through my father's plot to entrap him, and may have deceived us, though he has gained nothing by the deception, I agree to accept your offer, when you shall have proved to me that you are Prince Selim."

"That fact, lady, shall be proved to your satisfaction," replied Omrath, while his dark eyes flashed with joy. "Nor shall this sly fox of a surgeon win the packet."

Thus it was that Carew had a keen watch put upon all his movements, and even upon his glances. But Carew, after their arrival at the inn of which we have spoken, resolved to attempt to steal the packet, which he had no doubt was carried close to Sir Otto's heart.

Sir Otto and Sir Blaise took supper together, and Carew and Omrath attended upon them. Carew offered to pledge friendship with the Moslem in a goblet of wine, but the latter declined, saying that the laws of the Koran forbade the drinking of wine by all good and true Moslems.

"Your master claims to be a Moslem," said Carew, vexed by the reply, "and he is drinking. Drink, my friend."

"No. Sir Otto Dare is the keeper of his own conscience," replied Omrath. "But I will sleep, for I am weary." And addressing Sir Otto, he asked his permission to lie down upon the floor, as he was unable to retain his feet any longer.

"Sleep, Omrath," replied Sir Otto, "for there is none in my eyes."

"Nor in mine!" cried Sir Blaise, who was eating and drinking voraciously. "But I would that we had overtaken the maiden, for all that. But I will attend you, Sir Otto, I will attend you."

"Yes, for I may need the power of your presence and rank in effecting her arrest, when we overtake her, Sir Blaise," said Sir Otto.

Omrath sank down as if totally overcome with fatigue and want of sleep, and Carew muttered, as he gazed at him:

"He is exhausted. He will sleep as heavily as if he had drunk the wine. It is fortunate, for I feared I should be forced to use my dagger upon him. We shall soon see whether there is no sleep in your eyes, worthy knights."

Nor was it long before Sir Blaise suddenly began to nod as he ate, and so did Sir Otto; and within a

few minutes, both were leaning back in the high-backed chairs of the inn, snoring lustily.

"So," muttered Carew, as he saw the effects of the drug he had contrived to mix with the food and wine of the knights. "No sleep, eh? You never slept more soundly than you do now, my friends."

He waited a few minutes, and then, placing his hand upon Sir Otto's shoulder, shook him roughly. Sir Otto made no movement whatever in return. The effects of some soporific drug held his senses bound in profound sleep. Carew then shook Sir Blaise, but the latter simply growled and then snored again. The surgeon, cautious and vigilant, then thrust his foot against the prostrate form of Omrath. The Moslem muttered, moved his limbs, and was again motionless.

"So," said Carew, as his eyes gleamed with triumph, "all are asleep, and I can go to my work. No doubt Sir Otto has the packet in his bosom, or somewhere upon his person. I shall soon see."

With wary and experienced hands he felt about the dress of Sir Otto, and soon drew from the inner vest of the knight a packet enveloped in oiled silk, closely wound about with golden wire.

"I have it!" thought Carew, as he held the packet in his hand and gazed at it exultantly. "This must be it, for he has no other. Adieu, knights. Farewell, Sir Otto. I have made your slumber my ladder to fortune."

Concealing the packet in his bosom, he glided from the room, mounted his horse secretly, and spurred at full speed along the shortest road that led to London, sometimes laughing aloud as he galloped along, and exclaiming:

"At last I hold fortune in my grasp! At last! Baron Carew! It sounds well—Baron Carew!"

In haste to see Queen Elizabeth, for he had resolved to bargain with her for his reward, and confident that she would advance him as he desired, he revolved his plans as he rode.

"Her majesty must not be permitted to suspect that I have these proofs. I will first hint to her that her grandniece exists, and that the proofs of her birth exist also, and then that there is a plot to place Adelia Louvaine on the throne. She will at once offer me a great reward to find the proofs, and I shall so manage the affair that she shall bid higher and higher, and I shall at length fix my own terms. Nothing less than the title of Baron Carew, and the revenues of the confiscated estates of the conspirators—nothing less. It will cost Elizabeth nothing, and she will grant all. Fortune, I have thee at last!"

At an early hour, on the following morning, he resolved to open the packet and examine the contents. Riding slowly, he unwound the golden wire, took off the silk covering, and found that the packet was composed of blank papers, nothing more, except that upon one of these folded papers was written:

"God is great, and Mahomet is his Prophet! The thief hath his merited reward in finding his theft of no value."

Dashing the papers to the ground with a fierce malediction, Carew exclaimed:

"Cheated! baffled! beaten! and by that Moslem dog Omrath, whose eyes were upon me constantly. Curses seize him! But I must now hasten to Trethamdale Castle. The packet may yet be mine. Sir Otto is on his way to Dumfries. I may warn Duke Lewis, and receive his orders and aid to take the packet by force. But who has the packet? Certainly Sir Otto had no other about him. Doubtless the Moslem has it, Sir Otto fearing to carry it himself; for were it found upon him by any officer of the queen, his head would be in danger. But why hear a false packet in his bosom? I see now. The crafty Moslem suspected my purpose, or that my purpose was that of someone else, and therefore he provided his master with a false packet. Molina Maudstone is with them. I noticed that she and the Moslem several times exchanged glances yesterday, and twice they conversed apart. Ho! Molina Maudstone desires the packet. Heaven knows how she learned of its existence, but I think she knows its importance and desires to have it. So she makes love to the Moslem. Wait! I have the plot now. The Moslem has stolen the true packet; he placed one like it in size, shape, and weight and appearance in Sir Otto's bosom, that the theft might pass unsuspected for a time, until Sir Otto should desire to open it. Sir Otto would suspect nothing, for he would at all times feel the presence of the false packet in his vest. Sir Otto stole the real packet from Master Stepmore, and the words I read in the false one were meant for him, when he should discover his loss. So; the Moslem, after all, did not intend to outwit me, but Sir Otto. Good! I am unsuspected yet. I will retrace my steps and overtake the party. Ha! the Moslem has the contents of the lost casket!"

Now, as Jerome Carew threw down the false packet, he halted, and as he pondered over his dis-

appointment and its cause, his eyes were bent fixedly upon the ground, and all his sense of seeing and hearing was absorbed in unravelling the mystery which had so suddenly blasted his hopes of speedily becoming Baron Carew. A waggon might have passed along the sandy road and he would not have known it. His fall from his high hopes had been so sudden, so precipitate and headlong, that he was for a time crushed to insensibility of all that was passing near and around him. Many minutes passed without his speaking aloud the thoughts we have quoted, and during all that time his eyes were upon the ground, his ears closed except to his own reflections. But at length, with his eyes still fixed upon the ground at his feet, he began to utter his thoughts, as above quoted, aloud, and he concluded by saying, in a clear and distinct tone:

"Yes; the accursed Moslem, Omrath, has the packet. The 'Queen's Secret' shall yet be mine!"

And here he raised his eyes to wheel his tired horse and retrace his steps. To his amazement, he beheld two horsemen regarding him steadily, not ten paces from him.

Their approach had been almost noiseless through the deep dry sand of the road. They had come upon him suddenly around a sharp bend in the road, at a rapid trot; but the sand had muffled the tread of their horses' hoofs; and even had the road been hard and flinty, so deeply was Jerome Carew absorbed in his thoughts, he would not have heard them.

They were fifty yards from him when they first saw him, as they trotted around the curve, and they recognised him as Dr. Jerome Carew instantly. They saw that he was gazing upon the ground as motionless as a statue; and exchanging glances, they checked the speed of their horses, and approached him slowly, step by step, the hoofs of their steeds as noiseless as if treading upon wool. When within ten paces of him they reined up, and bent their eyes and ears upon him as he muttered his thoughts, and stared at the sand.

When he raised his eyes, his amazed gaze met their, and as he did so, a thrill of fear chilled his heart, for in the two horsemen he recognised Sir Bertram Stepmore and the outlawed earl.

He uttered a sharp cry of dismay, and would have made an attempt to escape upon his wearied steed: but as he uttered that sharp cry, which was almost a shriek, Sir Bertram and the earl were at his side, each with a fierce clutch upon his shoulder.

"Traitor! where is your master?" exclaimed Sir Bertram. "You left Stepmore Retreat with Lord Charles and Adelia Louvaine; where are they?"

"Villain!" cried the outlawed earl; "you spoke of a packet—of the contents of a stolen casket—of the 'Queen's Secret'; what know you of all these?"

The faces of the speakers were fierce, their eyes flaming with rage and suspicion; and even as they spoke, Jerome Carew saw more than a score of well-armed men sweeping into view around the curve, with Andrew and the others, whom the surgeon had drugged at the farmhouse, riding in front.

"That is the man!" shouted Andrew, as he rode up; "that is the poisoner of our food and drink, Sir Bertram. He was with Lord Charles, and we are sure that he put poison into our ale and porridge, for never slept I like a dead-drunk fool before."

"You returned to the farmhouse, where you drugged the servants who were with Adelia Louvaine," said Sir Bertram; "and you left it in company with Sir Otto Dare, who thought this man was slain—"

"This man as you call him," interrupted Carew, sullenly, for he saw no means of escape, "is not, as he calls himself, Edwin Hume, but—"

The hand of the earl was upon Carew's throat before the latter could complete his sentence, and he said, fiercely:

"Do you wish to die? If not, keep your knowledge of me between your teeth. Sir Otto thought I was dead, and sent his Moslems to bury me. But they left me in the grove, where I was found and restored to life by Sir Bertram. Make terms while you can, for your life hangs upon a thread."

"What would you?" gasped the treacherous surgeon, as the earl released his throat.

"Guide us to Sir Otto Dare and Lord Charles."

"They are far apart, and not likely to meet soon, I think. Sir Otto is riding hard towards Dumfries now, if he has not altered the course he was upon when I left him. Lord Charles is at Trethamdale Castle."

"And the lady—Adelia Louvaine?" cried Sir Bertram.

"Is doubtless his wife, or should be ere now," replied Carew, with a malignant glance at Sir Bertram. "You have no right to blame me in the matter. I was not intrusted with the care of the lady, nor am I longer in the service of Lord Charles. He told me he intended to take the lady to Trethamdale, and not to Dumfries; and as for that, Sir Bertram,

Lord Charles has been madly in love with Mistress Adelia Louvain ever since you showed him her portrait yonder in Ireland. He visited Stepmore Retreat to try to win her love and persuade her to fly with him. You saw fit to thrust her upon him. You threw your pet lamb into the jaws of the wolf. Do not blame me for anything I have done. It is true—why deny it?—that I drugged the servants at the farmhouse, but I did it at the command of Lord Charles, whose servant I then was. He used me so far, and the next day discharged me."

"Great heaven! what vile treachery in the man whose life I saved, and in whose sworn friendship I trusted!" groaned Sir Bertram, in bitter mental anguish.

"You said something of the 'Queen's Secret,'" exclaimed the earl. "What know you of that?"

"Nothing."

"Liar! There on the ground are the fragments of a packet—"

"Of nothing but blank paper," interrupted Carew, anxious to conceal his knowledge of the "Queen's Secret."

"True; but I suspect you thought they were something else when you stole them—for no doubt you are a cunning rascal—your very face declares that. You doubtless overheard something you should not have heard at Stepmore Retreat. I remember that you were stealing about the chambers, a sly, cat-footed knave. Out with it, man, I say, or you shall be hanged on the nearest tree."

"Oh, you dare not do that in England," said Carew. "What darest an outlaw not to do!" replied the earl, in a fierce, low tone, meant only for Carew's hearing.

"If you are the man I think you are," said Carew, in a guarded tone, "you are no longer an outlaw."

"Fall back," said Sir Bertram to those who were gathered near. "Fall back, men."

His followers, who were all servants or tenants of his father's estate, instantly obeyed, and the earl continued:

"Whom do you think I am?"

"Edgar Sheldon, Earl of Hereford, my lord."

"I am Edgar Sheldon, and I was Earl of Hereford."

"And are now, my lord; for Lewis, Duke of Trenthamdale, has obtained your lordship's pardon from Queen Elizabeth," said Carew.

"I suspected this. Do you know it?"

"I know it, for I was employed by the duke in some matter in his library, a month or two ago, and among his papers I saw a parchment bearing the royal seal and signature of Elizabeth, and containing full pardon to Edgar Sheldon, Earl of Hereford, for all deeds done or meditated against the peace of the realm in favour of Mary, late Queen of Scotland, and restoration to his title and estates. So I pray your lordship, for this service, to set me free, and let me pass on."

"I cannot trust nor believe so shrewd a villain as you are, man," replied the earl, sternly. "You must go with us, for so adroit a spy upon the secrets of others has no doubt learned the 'Queen's Secret,' and I see it in your eye to go to the queen and unfold your stolen budget, if only for revenge. The packet which contains 'the Queen's Secret' was covered with silk of that colour,—here the earl pointed at the silken envelope which Carew had torn from the false packet—'and wound around with golden wire, such as I see upon the sand. You have discovered something, and made an attempt to discover and use all. Confess, or the nearest tree will speedily bear an acorn which dangles from a halter."

Carew saw that the earl was earnest in his threat; and fearing for his life, he said:

"Sir Otto, I thought, had the contents of the stolen packet I heard of at Stepmore Retreat, and that which lies upon the ground was in his bosom last night."

"So you robbed him?"

"If taking from a robber that which he has stolen is robbery, I robbed Sir Otto. You see I was deceived. Sir Otto still has 'the Queen's Secret.'"

"What of Omrah, the Moslem?" demanded the earl. "Ah, knave, you change colour! You are brim full of treachery yet. I overheard you say as we listened to your spoken thoughts just now, 'Omrah, the Moslem, has the 'Queen's Secret.'"

"Let him be mounted on a fresher horse than his own," said Sir Bertram. "He shall be bound and go with us to Trenthamdale Castle. Adelia must be rescued from Lord Charles."

"And from Duke Lewis, for no doubt he will discover that she is my daughter if he sees her. But you advise prudently, Sir Bertram. We will first rescue Adelia, and then pursue Sir Otto as he journeys towards Scotland," remarked the earl, as he proceeded to bind Carew's arms behind his back.

When this was done, and the surgeon mounted upon a fresh horse, the whole party wheeled about and took the shortest road to Trenthamdale Castle, Carew being

bound to his horse and riding between the earl and Sir Bertram.

"Ah," thought the surgeon, as he was thus borne along at a rapid pace, "here is a fine end to Baron Carew and his plans. At least, the plans of others will be as bitterly made chaff and ashes. That is some consolation!"

Sir Otto and Sir Blaize would have slept all night, after the flight of Carew, had not Omrah taken sharp means to awake them after they had slumbered and snored for three long hours.

The Moslem burned feathers and sulphur under their noses before he could arouse them from their stupor, and when they were sufficiently awake he gave them wine in which he had dissolved some Arabian drug, the effect of which soon made them as wide awake as ever they were in their lives, and somewhat excited.

"What is it, Omrah?" asked Sir Otto, snapping his ugly eyes wildly, after his draught. "Have I been asleep or drunk?"

"My eyes feel as if an army of moles, commanded by snails and blind worms, had marched over them!" said Sir Blaize, as he stared about him. "Surely I have not been drunk. I do not remember drinking deeply before I fell asleep."

Sir Blaize had swallowed a small modicum of about half-a-gallon before he succumbed to the drugs of the surgeon, but that was nothing to a man of his wide thirst. He glanced at the table before him, and his glance numbered the empty bottles.

"Eh! Only six empty bottles between us, Sir Otto," he exclaimed. "Only six miserable empty bottles have we punished. Three for you, and three for me! Bah! and we went to sleep over three empty bottles each! Pah! Why I have emptied seven at a sitting often, and walked as steady after it as a thirsty camel. Three bottles! Gods, we have grown old and temperate, and become as abstemious as sick sailors. To the full bottles, Sir Otto! Let us retrieve our endangered reputations!"

With this the old toper seized a full bottle of wine and emptied it into a huge wooden goblet, and began to retrieve his reputation.

But Sir Otto knew that three bottles of wine had not been swallowed by him. He had a strange buzzing in his head too, and after a moment's thought, he said:

"Have I been drunk, Omrah?"

"No, my lord. You have been drugged."

"Drugged!" cried Sir Otto. "By whom?"

"By the surgeon, no doubt, as he has disappeared, Sir Otto."

"The scoundrel! But why should he have done it? Ah! devil and fury! the packet is gone!" he added, clapping his hand to his bosom, and starting up. "Robbed! The 'Queen's Secret' is lost! To the saddle! Sound the alarm, Omrah! Which way went the rascal? A thousand crowns to the one who regains the packet! To horse!"

The blare of Omrah's trumpet filled the inn, and aroused all within it, and after much hasty discussion and examination of the matter, Sir Otto said:

"The dog was in the service of Lord Charles, and doubtless committed the theft for his master. He must be overtaken. No doubt he is hurrying on to give the packet to Lord Charles."

In this belief he and his troop rode on until morning on the road to Dumfries, and would have continued upon that route, had they not overtaken a traveller, who, on being questioned whether any one had passed him travelling fast, replied:

"I am on my way to Dumfries, and no one has passed me. I have been upon the road always used, for three or four days."

"Sir Otto," said Molina Maudstone, who still clung to the party, "I have thought that Lord Charles may have turned aside with the maiden, and persuaded her to accept him as her lover. I know his habits, and am sure he has gone to his father's castle."

"Think you he would betray the trust Sir Bertram placed in him, lady?"

Molina Maudstone laughed, as she replied: "He would betray his God, did he believe in one, as readily as Judas. I am sure he has carried the girl to his favourite haunt at Trenthamdale Castle, and if Carew stole the packet for him, you will find both of them there."

"Then we will wheel about and hasten thitherward," said Sir Otto. "But we need a guide."

"I will be your guide, Sir Otto," replied Molina, who was vexed that Sir Bertram Stepmore had not overtaken them, and who now believed that Sir Bertram would direct his pursuit of Adelia towards Trenthamdale, if he suspected, as she did, that Lord Charles had played traitor to his trust.

"My mind is made up," she thought, as the course of the party was changed, "to accept the offers of Omrah, if he can prove to me that he is Prince Selim, the son and heir of Sultan Mahomet. But if Sir Bertram falls before this is proved, I may yet be Duchess o-

Trenthamdale. In any event, I wish to follow this matter to the end. Omrah has placed the packet he calls the 'Queen's Secret' in my hands, and it is in my bosom. I am eager to read it, and will find an opportunity soon."

Thus at the same time and far apart from each other, there were two parties on the way to Trenthamdale Castle.

There was another party also, an aged man, who had set forth from Stepmore Retreat in a litter, borne by eight stout and fleet-footed men, no other than Master Richard Stepmore, in whose mind a suspicion, as sudden as it was profound, had arisen, that Lord Charles and Duke Lewis had discovered the true parentage of Adelia Louvain, and that Sir Bertram, the outlawed earl and himself had blindly confided the maiden to the care of the very man who would conduct her to treacherous Lewis, Duke of Trenthamdale; and so Master Richard Stepmore was on his way to speak with Duke Lewis, travelling as fast as men could carry him. As he had aimed straight for Trenthamdale Castle when he left Stepmore Retreat, there was every probability that he would arrive there as soon as Sir Otto or Sir Bertram, though they travelled on horses.

(To be continued.)

## FACETIÆ.

A Motto applicable to rapid young men—fast bound, fast found.

A HUSBAND complains sadly at the price of "ducks." His wife recently bought three for twenty-six pounds, viz.: A "duck" of a dress, a "duck" of a bonnet, and a "duck" of a parasol.

"You and your wife should become one," said a friendly adviser to a hen-pecked husband. "Become one?" exclaimed hen-pecked; "why, we are ten now." "How so?" "She's 1, and I'm 0."

## A VOUCHER.

A man once went to purchase a horse of a Quaker. "Will he draw well?" asked the buyer.

"Thee will be pleased to see him draw."

The bargain was concluded and the farmer tried the horse, but he would not stir a step. He returned, and said: "That horse will not draw an inch."

"I did not tell thee that he would draw, friend, I only remarked that it would please thee to see him draw, and so it would me, but he would never gratify me in that respect."

"No, Biddy," said Patrick to his wife, "you never catch any lies coming out of my mouth." "You may well say that," replied Biddy; "they fly out so fast that nobody can catch 'em."

A CONVICT wrote a letter to his brother, a serious letter, without an attempt at a joke, which, however, concluded thus: "I must leave off now; my feet are so cold I cannot hold my pen."

"Well, Jones, did you see anything of our friend Smith?" "Yes, gone deranged." "Has he?" "Yes indeed; he doesn't know his own hogs from those of his neighbours!"

## ROASTED RABBITS.

The Brazilians seldom knock at the door as we do. They clap the palms of the hands together two or three times, which answers the same purpose. They never enter an open room without giving notice or asking leave—*com licença*—among the most intimate friends. In the streets they never call after each other, but attract the attention of the persons they wish to detain by a "shu!" which may be heard some distance. When a lady stops you in the street, which is unusual, it is customary to stand with the hat off until she tells you to put it on. "Once on a time," a loquacious Senora encountered in the hot sunshine in the street, a gentleman of her intimate acquaintance, named Coelho (Rabbit), and detained him for some time, hat in hand, without requesting him to put it on, and, after asking particularly about all the members of the family, one by one, added:

"You may be sure that I like all of the Rabbits."

The gentleman, who was scarcely able to support the noonday heat, answered, demurely:

"Yes, my Senora, and I see that you like them best roasted."

A SCHOOLMASTER asked one of his scholars in the winter time what was the Latin for cold? "Oh, sir," answered the lad, "I forget at this moment, although I have it at my fingers' ends."

HOW TO BE BEAUTIFUL.—It is a question that burdens the mass of womankind so much. Curls and cosmetics are all in requisition to enhance the beauty of "the human face divine"—but what is the result? Youth's roses only flee the faster—old age will creep on apace; rouge cannot hide its wrinkles,



nor can it make any face beautiful. We are decided believers in the old adage—"Handsome is that handsome does." No face has true beauty in it that does not mirror the deeds of a noble soul. Not a thought, word, or deed, but leaves its autograph written on the human countenance; and we care not whether kind Nature has given her child an ugly face or a handsome one, if the heart that beats underneath all is warm and loving. And if the soul that looks out from the two eyes be true and pure, that face will be beautiful always, for it has found the true fountain of youth; and though time may fold the hair in silver, and furrow the brow, yet there will ever be a beauty lighting it up that years cannot dim, for the heart and soul never grow old nor die.

## RIGHT AND LEFT.

Two Quaker girls were ironing on the same table. One asked the other what side she would take, the right or left? She answered promptly, "It will be right for me to take the left, and then it will be left to thee to take the right."

The coolest thing at the summer resorts is the coolness of the landlords in charging you for what you don't get.

The man who tried to sweeten his tea with one of his wife's smiles has "fallen back" on sugar. Nothing like first principles after all.

A LADY recently advertised for employment as follows: "A young widow lady wishes to superintend a widower's household, and would not object to the supervision of a child."

"MADAM," said an old gentleman to his house-keeper, "in primitive countries, beef is often the legal tender; but madam," said he, emphatically, thrusting his fork into the steak, "all the law in Christendom couldn't make this beef tender."

A WIDOW lady received a present of a turkey. "Who sent it?" she asked of the Irish porter. "I was told not to tell," said he. "Ah! I can guess," said the lady. "Bedad, that's just what I told Deacon Grant," said the porter.

## LEGAL MEDICO ADVICE.

Husband: "Yes, I did say if you cured my old woman I'd pay you. But you didn't cure her! And you say you didn't kill her! Then I'd like to know if I'm expected to pay a big bill for your visits? Go to law! I can prove that I promised to pay if you cured."

A BOY at a crossing, begging something of a gentleman, the latter told him "he would give him a trifle when he came back." "Your honour," replied the boy, "you would be surprised if you knew how much money I lose by giving credit in that way."

LAUGHTER is an external expression of joy; it is the most salutary of all the bodily movements, for it agitates both the body and the soul at the same time, promotes digestion, circulation, and perspiration, and enlivens the vital power in every organ.

THE extensive authority of parents under Chinese laws is well known. A Chinese of forty years old, whose aged mother flogged him every day, shed tears in the company of one of his friends. "Why do you weep?" "Alas, things are not as they used to be. The poor woman's arm grows feebler every day!"

AN old miser, who was notoriously parsimonious, being ill, was obliged reluctantly to consult a doctor. "What shall I do with my head?" said the old man, "it's so dizzy I seem to see double." The doctor wrote a prescription and retired:—"When you see double you will find relief if you count your money."

AN ACCOMMODATING SERVANT.—A gentleman addressed his servant: "James, I have always placed the greatest confidence in you; now tell me, James, how is it that my butcher's bills are so large, and I always have such bad dinners?" "Really, sir, I don't know; for I am sure we never have anything nice in the kitchen that we don't send some of into the dining-room."

MAKING IT EASY FOR HIM.—A Frenchman owed a man eight hundred francs, and he made a proposition to give him eight notes, payable monthly, for one hundred francs each. The first note was protested. The creditor demanded an explanation. "I didn't want you to lose eight hundred francs all at once, so I divided it up, that your loss might fall upon you by driplets."

SHOCKING DUEL IN SPAIN.—A shocking duel has taken place in Madrid. The incident which led to the encounter was, it seems, of the most trivial character. Don Celestino Olozaga, the young man who has been killed, was at the Opera, and happened to drop his cane upon Count de Jara, who thereupon became very irritated, and would not believe that the cane had fallen by accident, though assured that

such was the case. Hot words arose and ultimately a duel with swords was arranged, which took place next morning. Count de Jara, who is said, to be an excellent swordsman, escaped unhurt; his opponent, who knew nothing of the weapon he fought with, was run through the body, and died instantly. Don Celestino Olozaga is described as a very promising young man of six-and-twenty. He was one of the secretaries of the Cortes, and nephew of Don Salustiano Olozaga, formerly Minister of Queen Isabella, but more recently representative in Paris of the Provisional Government of Spain. This terrible tragedy, as may be imagined, has created a very painful feeling in Madrid.

## MAY DAY.

THE streaks of dawn are pale and gray,  
The stars yet faintly beaming,  
Before the sun's reviving ray  
Can through the clouds come streaming.  
The village lads with hearts so gay,  
Are up the woodlands sweeping,  
Or through the dotted meadow stray,  
Sweet, coloured flow'rets seeking.

For now 'tis May, the first of May,  
And all must up, off, and away,  
The may-pole's garland finding.  
Whether the flowers be wild or rare,  
Each one must contribute his share,  
With clusters green entwining.

The early bells ring out a peal,  
Which over the hills goes sounding;  
While little ones the village fill,  
Each heart with joy abounding,  
To watch the maidens deck the pole,  
And see it nobly standing,  
Its ribbons from its crested poll  
In streamers gaily hanging.

For now 'tis May. The pole there stands  
As placed by smithy's brawny hands,  
The festive joys awaiting,  
While voices young with loud hurrah!  
Greet lads and lasses on their way  
To find their usual mating.

The village maids, all dressed in white,  
With garlands round them trailing;  
And youths with eyes of lustre bright,  
Prepare for roundelaying.  
Some doubting maidens cast a glance  
Towards their partners for the dance,  
With rather serious pouting;  
While others don a smiling face  
Well suited with their pleasant place,  
And use an artful flouting.

But now 'tis May, that joyous day,  
And all must use their best display,  
Without their anger glancing,  
So then, with smile put on, or pure,  
Each takes her station so demure,  
Quite ready for the dancing.

The village inn is gay and trim,  
And forth good cheer they're bringing  
To old and young who look so prim,  
Their jovial songs while singing.  
The piper, wreathed from top to toe,  
Steps off, the ditty playing;  
Then lightly tripping to and fro,  
All 'gin the dance displaying.

For now 'tis May, the flowery May,  
And all with hearts so blithe and gay;  
So lightly, sprightly tripping,  
Each lad and lass upon the grass,  
Crack laughing joke as quick they pass,  
Around the garland skipping.

And now with flushed and heated brows,  
With hearts through frolic beating,  
They leave the pole, 'neath olmy boughs,  
They wisp' a fond love greeting.  
And others, as the day wears on,  
With mirthful sports the hours prolong,  
To glad the happy meeting.

And as the sun sinks in the west,  
The host brings forth the very best,  
The house affords, for eating.

For now 'tis May, the holiday,  
These pleasant hours must pass away,  
For others that come straying.  
So then with cups and parting song,  
They sing with lusty chorus long,  
To their next merry Maying.

Geo. C. SWAIN.

NEW AND GIGANTIC PLANT.—Living specimens have recently been forwarded to this country from Nicaragua of one of the most gigantic plants in the vegetable kingdom. It is closely allied to the Arums (or "Lords and Ladies") of our hedges, and, until

the present time, has wholly escaped the notice of travelling botanists. It produces but one leaf, nearly 14 ft. in length, supported on a stalk 10 ft. long. The stem of the flower is a foot in circumference, the spathe or flower 2 ft. long, purplish blue in colour, with a powerful carrion-like odour. As this remarkable species of Ardisia is quite new to science, it has not yet received a name.

## HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

SOAP-SUDS is an excellent fertiliser of grass and grape-vines, and should not be wasted. A bit of alum in a tub of soap-suds sends the dirt and soap to the bottom and leaves the water fit for use again, if carefully poured off from the sediment, which becomes a concentrated fertiliser, almost as good as guano. If a lump of alum as large as the thumb-joint is thrown into four or five gallons of boiling soap-suds, the scum runs over and leaves the water clean and soft and useful for washing. We have often "settled" a glass of Thames water, and made it look as "clear as a bell" in a few seconds by tying a bit of alum to a string and twirling it around under the surface of the water in the glass.

INK FROM ELDER.—According to a German journal, an excellent permanent black ink may be made from the common elder. The bruised berries are placed in an earthen vessel and kept in a warm place for three days, and then pressed out and filtered. The filtered juice is of such an intense colour that it takes 200 parts of water to reduce it to the shade of dark red wine. Add to 12½ parts of this filtered juice, one ounce of sulphate of iron and the same quantity of pyroligneous acid, and an ink is prepared which, when first used, has the colour of violet, but when dry is indigo blue black. The ink is superior in some respects to that prepared with galls. It does not become thick so soon; it flows easier from the pen without gumming; and in writing the letters do not run into one another.

## MISCELLANEOUS.

SALE OF PAINTINGS BY THE OLD MASTERS.—At the sale of the Délessert collection of pictures in Paris, Raphael's "Virgin and Child" sold for 150,000 francs, (6,250*l.*), the Duc d'Anjou's portrait of the purchaser; and Vanduyck's portrait of "Michael le Bion" for 150,500 francs, (6,270*l.*). A Cuyt sold for 92,000 francs, (3,884*l.*).

AN ANCIENT TREE.—The oldest tree on record in Europe is asserted to be the Cypress of Sonoma in Lombardy, Italy. This tree is believed to have been in existence at the time of Julius Caesar, forty-two years before Christ, and is therefore 1911 years old. It is 106 ft. in height, and 20 ft. in circumference at 1 ft. from the ground. Napoleon, when laying down his plan for the great road over the Simplon, diverged from a straight line to avoid injuring this tree. Superior antiquity is claimed for the immense tree in Calaveras County, California. This is supposed from the number of concentric circles in the trunk to be 2,565 years old.

ABYSSINIAN AFFAIRS.—Politics in Abyssinia appear to be in a fearful chaos. The latest information is that Menelik, King of Shoa, and the Wakshum Gobaze were in the vicinity of Magdala, ready for battle. Mastyat, the Queen of the Wallo-Gallas, had joined the latter; and Queen Warkitt, her rival, had allied herself to the former, both bringing a large contingent in support of their respective confederates. 'Ali Faria, the chief of Yadiow, still holds his own; but in the event of a battle between Menelik and the Wakshum Gobaze, he will be obliged to submit to the conqueror. Gondar, the old capital, is held by a rebel leader, supposed to be Bitwaddad Hailo, one of the late chiefs of Magdala, as all the Amhara country to the north and west of Lake Tana is governed conjointly by him and his cousin. Balambaral Gabra-Mahane 'Alam. Mashisha, Theodore's eldest son, is a prisoner in the hands of the latter chief. An attempt to capture him was made by the son of Tadia Gwalo, the chief of Gojjam, which was so far successful, that the assailants were carrying him off to imprison him in the Amba of Gojjam, when the people of the Balambaras overtook them and rescued the captive. The prince has now been sent as a prisoner to the Sar-Amba, in Chelga. Kisan, of Tigre, is sending 20,000 dollars to Cairo, to obtain a new Abuna from the Coptic Patriarch. By the latest accounts received at Massowah, Menelik and Gobaze had come to an understanding, and the latter was returning to Debra-Tabor. Gobaze was expected in Tigre, but it is questioned whether he will be able to make his way thither through the intermediate country, which is still held by the rebels.

## CONTENTS.

	Page		Page
AFTER THREE YEARS	1	HOUSEHOLD TREASURES	23
THE HOUSE OF MAR-		MAY DAY	23
riage	4	MISCELLANEOUS	23
BURTS PLACED IN THE		NEW AND GIANTIC	
HOTEL DE VILLE,		PLANT	23
PARIS	4	AN ANCIENT TREE	23
THE ENCHANTMENTS	5	SHOCKING DUEL IN	
THE PROPHECY	8	SPAIN	23
UNDER THE STARS	10		
THE BLACK KNIGHT'S			No.
CHALLENGE	13	FAIRLEIGH; OR, THE	
SCIENCE	16	BANKER'S SECRET,	
ESSENCE OF DISCREET	16	commenced in	239
ART OF COLOURING		ADELICIA, commenced in	300
MARBLE	16	THE PROPHECY, com-	
FAIRLEIGH; OR, THE		menced in	303
BANKER'S SECRET	17	THE BLACK KNIGHT'S	
YACHTING FIXTURES		CHALLENGE com-	
FOR 1899	19	menced in	307
THE ALBATROSS	19	THE ENCHANTMENTS,	
ADELICIA	20	commenced in	309
FACETIES	22	AFTER THREE YEARS	
ABYSSINIAN AFFAIRS	23	commenced in	312

## NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

W. JOS. KENNEDY.—The address is—Miss Burdett Courts, Hampstead, London, N.

G. R. BISSY.—We do not profess to judge of character by calligraphy.

G. DUVAL.—Hair dark brown: handwriting very fair, but scarcely bold enough.

YOUNG CLERE.—Southampton Docks were opened in 1850.

POETRY.—"A Spell Broken" and "Ill Wishes come Home to Boast" declined with thanks.

A CONSTANT READER.—We do not know of a work upon the subject. Apply at a respectable confectioner's.

SEPTIMA.—Write to Heralds' College, Bennet's Hill, Doctors' Commons. You will get every information.

TALOR SAM.—1. The creditors can come upon the estate, but not upon the widow. 2. The second husband is free from liability for the first husband's debts.

M. A. S.—If you take the article to a respectable curiosity shop, the proprietor will give you his opinion as to its genuineness and value.

AN APPRENTICE.—You are not bound to serve the seven weeks of illness, nor do we think your master would ask it.

W. B. C.—1. It is quite lawful. 2. No clergyman will refuse. 3. You could get a common licence from Doctors' Commons for 2l. 10s.

MORNING STAR.—You had better apply to a naturalist. There are different methods, according to the nature of the bird.

ANNIE S.—1. The marriage would be quite legal. 2. Your handwriting would be elegant if you took more pains to form your letters.

JACK T.—The Romans considered eels one of the greatest delicacies of the table; they were preserved and fed with the greatest care.

A STATISTICAL.—Write to the secretary of the Post Office, St. Martin-le-Grand, London. You will get all the necessary information by so doing.

ENQUIRER.—The better plan would be to take the engravings to a picture-cleaner. You run a risk of spoiling them if you attempt the task yourself. The charge will be trifling.

BLACK DIAMOND.—It is calculated that Newcastle and its neighbourhood can supply us with coal for a thousand years more, though two millions and a half of children are dug out every year.

HALL NOBLE.—1. Mrs. Henry Wood is the author of "East Lynne." It was published by Richard Bentley, New Burlington-street, about six years ago. 2. We cannot find much evidence of talent in your verses.

IRISHMAN.—You can purchase for a few shillings an Emigrant's Guide to the United States and British America. You will there find every information desired in your case. Our space is too limited to enter into the question fully.

HARRY BROWN.—Tapestry was introduced into England by Eleanor of Castile, the wife of Edward I. These early robes were not the work of the loom, but of the needle, for which the British ladies were particularly celebrated.

YOUNG HOUSEWIFE.—To make curry powder, take of coriander seeds 1l oz., turmeric 4 oz., cayenne 1 oz., black pepper 5 oz., pimento 2 oz., cloves 1 oz., cinnamon 3 oz., shallots 1 oz. All these should be recently ground or powdered.

BEEFEATER.—If you continue to make your habits consistent with the signature you have adopted, the chances of a decrease in bulk are against you. Adopt a farinaceous diet, and avoid malt liquors.

FORGET ME NOT.—They are quite different. Sage is the inner pith of a species of palm-tree, growing in the Moluccas and Ceram. Tipocaia is from the root of a South American plant called Cassava. They are prepared some in the same way.

C. F. THOMSON.—Your verses "The Man of Fashion" would be a wholesome satire on the present young man of the period were they finished a little more in consonance with poetic art. As it is, the attempt, though crude, is creditable.

GERALD C.—The Camry Isles were known to the ancients. Juba, the king of Mauritania, who was a contemporary of Caesar, is said to have described them with tolerable accuracy under the general name of the Fortunatae Isles. It is known that even at that remote age they possessed a population that had made some respect-

able advances to civilization. Their position was again lost to Europeans until the first half of the fourteenth century, when they were discovered by certain fugitive Spaniards who were hard pressed by the Moors.

L. M. B.—All depends on the cause of the dryness. If it proceeds from disorder of the stomach, consult your medical man. Rub your face with glycerine, which is perfectly harmless; it will also soften and whiten the hands.

INSURED ONE.—If the accident arose from the negligence or carelessness of the driver of the vehicle, the owner thereof is liable in damages for the injury sustained. The only remedy is an action in the County Court, or in one of the superior courts of law.

A. B.—If a husband deserts his wife, and she remains ignorant of his whereabouts for seven years, she may legally marry; but the second marriage will be void if the first husband re-appears, and the children of the second marriage will be illegitimate.

A STEPMOTHER.—At your husband's decease you are entitled to share the effects with the first wife's children, and it is not compulsory on your part to provide anything for their maintenance, supposing the property is insufficient.

CYRIL.—If your master treats you cruelly or unjustly, you have your remedy, as he has his if you break the engagement. We would advise you to refrain from high words, and do all you can to perfect yourself in your trade. Runaways rarely come to good. Handwriting legible and businesslike.

MARY JANE.—1. We do not know the American address. If you write to 22, Old Broad-street, City, London, the letter will reach him. 2. We cannot tell what your friend's object is in going to the West Indies, or how long he intends to stay. All depends upon his occupation and inclination.

SUBSCRIBER (Staleybridge).—The payments under a bastardy order run not from the birth of a child, but the day of the complaint to the magistrate and applying for a summons. A child six years old may be affiliated, if the father contributed to its maintenance before it was one year old.

STUDENT.—In both cases the candidate is required to write from dictation, legibly and quickly, and without any blunders in spelling. In arithmetic, he is examined in all the rules, including vulgar and decimal fractions. He is also examined as to age, health, and moral character. Age of admission, up to twenty-five years.

## IN FUR.

Be pure! the task is hard,  
Slight seems the present gain,  
From earth thou'lt be debarred;  
Thou must be friends with pain;  
The world will strive to soil  
Thy soul with thoughts of ill;  
Fear not the pain, the toil,  
Be pure, oh, brother, still!

Be pure! in life's long way,  
While thy feet homeward range,  
False dreams of light will away,  
Tempting thy heart to change;  
Distrust the fairest dream,  
That tempts thee to forget  
What once did holy seem,  
Be true, oh, brother, yet!

T. H.

LA BELLE BLANCHE.—We do not wonder that your plainer sister is the favourite. Amiability and modesty are more valued than beauty. Try to think less of your own personal appearance, and more of the feelings of others, and you will no longer have to complain of neglect.

CORRIER GIRL.—1. We could not recommend a dye for such a purpose, as you would run the risk of losing your eyesight. Pencilising is the safest operation, if you are determined to try to improve nature's handiwork. Be a sensible girl and do nothing of the sort. 2. Your handwriting is elegant and ladylike.

PERCY TREMAINE.—Unless you have a special aptitude for the stage we would advise you to stick to business. The profession is a very arduous one, and if there are brilliant rewards for eminence, there are also many heart-breaking disappointments and misery for mediocrity. Mr. Edward Stirling, of the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane, gives lessons to histrionic aspirants.

HISTORICAL.—The Spanish hero called "the Cid," was one of the greatest captains of the eleventh century, called Rodrigo Diaz de Bivar. He distinguished himself in actions against the Moors of Spain, whom he vanquished on several occasions, and from whom he took Valencia and many other places of importance. He lived in an age of chivalry, and his whole life was a perfect romance. He died about the year 1098.

SORROWFUL SILVIA.—Your trouble is doubtless hard to bear, but far better suffer silently than confide in a former lover, even though he professes only to have a brother's affection for you. Such sympathy is fraught with danger. Be advised by us: shun your old love, and study your husband more. He must be your best friend. Perhaps your own frivolous behaviour may be the cause of his coolness.

DEVOIS.—Compigne is distant rather more than fifty miles from Paris, and some twenty miles from Creuil, well known to all travellers on the Chemin de Fer du Nord proceeding from this side of the channel. During the summer months there are excursion trains to Compigne from Paris regularly every Sunday. In the autumn the imperial court is installed in the chateau, and the days are given to hunting, shooting, and forest excursions, and the evenings to banquets, balls, and theatrical performances.

GEO. D. GORNO, middle height, handsome, and with 300l. capital. Respondent must be good looking, and have the same amount.

JESSIE, LIZIE, and MARION.—"Jessie," nineteen, 5ft. 4in., dark hair and eyes, fair complexion, and can sing and play well. Respondent must be tall, fair, and not less than twenty-eight. "Lizzie," eighteen, 5ft. 4in., light brown hair, deep blue eyes, fair complexion, lively

and cheerful, and has a good business. Respondent must be tall, dark, affectionate, and not above twenty-six. "Marion," seventeen, 5ft. 3in., dark brown hair, dark gray eyes, of a lively disposition, and musical. Respondent must be tall, not more than twenty-two, and with an income of 150l.

FREDERICK, twenty-two, tall, dark, handsome, and with an income of 220l. Respondent must be of a cheerful and lively disposition, and have a good income; good looks no object.

ROBERT, nineteen, medium height, fair, considered good looking, well educated, of a respectable family, and in a commercial business, with good prospects for the future.

C. A. M., tailor, short, light, and good looking. Respondent must not be above twenty, good looking, and good tempered.

J. V. J., twenty-two, tall, fair, good natured, and engaged in the city at a salary of 200l. a-year. Respondent must be about eighteen, dark complexion preferred; money no object.

J. W. (Newport), twenty-one, 5ft. 11in., dark brown hair, bad tempered, but very steady. Respondent must be of medium height, loving disposition, and fond of music; money no object.

DON LOTHARIO, twenty, a rising actor, speaks several languages, and has a profession. Respondent must be domesticated, have a little money, and no objection to travelling.

BONA FIDE, 5ft. 5in., good looking, a steady mechanic, with money. Respondent must be from seventeen to twenty-one, medium height, good looking, and fond of home; money no object.

ROCCO, twenty-five, 5ft. 6in., very dark, quiet, good tempered, and an artist. Respondent must not be tall, with good figure, golden hair, fond of music, and with household taste and economy.

J. B., thirty, dark hair and eyes, and income from 1,000l. to 1,500l. yearly. Respondent must be a lady of good family, able to play the piano, and have a dowry or small income settled upon herself. She would be required to go to China or Japan in July.

THEATRICAL, twenty-two, 5ft. 6in., good looking, of gentlemanly appearance, dark brown hair, and fair complexion. Respondent must be from seventeen to twenty, ladylike, pretty, not proud, and with a business she can work at; fair complexion preferred.

CLARA D. and ADA.—"Clara D.," twenty, medium height, good looking, thoroughly domesticated, and has 300l. Respondent must be tall, good tempered, and hold a good situation. *Cartes de visite* exchanged. "Ada," nineteen, tall, fair, good looking, and will have 300l. when of age. Respondent must be tall and dark; a clerk preferred.

JULIA, MINNIE, and LOVELY POLLY.—"Julia," twenty-three, medium height, fair. "Minnie," twenty, medium height, dark. Respondent must be thoroughly respectable. "Lovely Polly," twenty-three, medium height, and dark. Respondent must be tall, dark, and a ship's mate.

ACHILLES and ENDYMION.—"Achilles" (seaman-gunner), twenty, 5ft. 7in., blue eyes, auburn hair, fair complexion, very respectable, and steady. "Endymion," twenty, seaman-gunner, 5ft. 8in., blue eyes, dark hair and complexion, and steady. Respondent must be eighteen, and have dark hair and complexion; an inland town girl preferred.

LIZZIE, JULIA, and EMILY.—"Lizzie," seventeen, rather tall, blue eyes, light hair, and good-tempered. "Julia," sixteen, medium height, dark brown hair and eyes, and fond of home. "Emily," fifteen, medium height, light hair, blue eyes, and thoroughly domesticated. Respondents must be dark; three friends preferred.

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